Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-SIX • NUMBER FOUR • OCTOBER 1993

If Bosnians Were Dolphins...
Edward N. Luttwak

Islam & the West (including Manhattan)
Martin Kramer

Wilson's Character
Jeremy Rabkin

My Jewish Roots
David Klinghoffer

Culture Shocks — A Story
Vladimir Matlin

Much Ado About Branagh
Richard Ryan

Yeltsin's Russia: An Exchange
Vladimir Bukovsky & Critics

Books in Review: Joseph Adelson / Patrick Glynn / William McGurn / Gary Saul Morson / Donald Lyons

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VOLUME 96 NUMBER FOUR *OCTOBER 1993*

Articles **27** If Bosnians Were Dolphins . . . *Edward N. Luttwak*

33 Islam & the West (including Manhattan) *Martin Kramer*

38 Wilson's Character *Jeremy Rabkin*

Story **44** Culture Shocks *Vladimir Matlin*

Observations **50** My Jewish Roots *David Klinghoffer*

Movies **52** Much Ado About Branagh *Richard Ryan*

Letters **2** Yeltsin's Russia

John R. Guardiano, Dmitry Mikheyev, Vladimir Osherov, Wisla Surazska, Albert L. Weeks, and Vladimir Bukovsky

Also, letters from *David Bromwich, Ellen Willis, Phyllis Franklin, Carol Iannone, Joel B. Wolowelsky, Aviva Barzel, Herman J. Obermayer, Alan Mintz, Peter Duesberg, Harry Rubin, Tom Bethell, Michael Fumento, Edward Alexander,* and others

Books in Review **56** The Subversive Family, by Ferdinand Mount *Joseph Adelson*

57 The Real World Order, by Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky *Patrick Glynn*

60 A Mother's Ordeal, by Steven W. Mosher *William McGurn*

62 Bitter Carnival, by Michael André Bernstein *Gary Saul Morson*

64 The Culture of Complaint, by Robert Hughes *Donald Lyons*

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Letters from Readers

Yeltsin's Russia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Boris Yeltsin's Hollow Victory" by Vladimir Bukovsky [June] is so wildly off-base, so blatantly erroneous, so gravely mistaken, that it cries out for rebuke. Unfortunately, because of space limitations, I am unable to give his argument the complete and total thrashing it so richly deserves. Nonetheless, allow me to correct at least a few of Mr. Bukovsky's many misconceptions.

1. Russia, Mr. Bukovsky insists, is suffering from Polish-style economic "shock therapy," which he defines as price liberalization and tight monetary and fiscal policies.

Wrong. As any economist worth his salt can tell you, tight monetary and fiscal policies are a simple necessity in Russia's present near-hyper-inflationary environment, where budget deficits can be financed only through the excess printing of rubles, which inevitably leads to high and hyper-inflation. In the economically advanced countries of the West, by contrast, budget deficits are far less inflationary since they typically are financed by drawing upon the reserves of international-capital markets, which . . . hardly exist in Russia. So Mr. Bukovsky is wrong in principle: tight fiscal and monetary policies are not "bad"; they are "good," particularly in Russia today.

Mr. Bukovsky is also wrong in fact because Polish-style economic "shock therapy" has not yet been tried in Russia. Indeed, the Russian Central Bank has printed more rubles in the past three years than in all of Russian history combined; and credits and subsidies to loss-making state enterprises continue unabated. Consequently, the Russian central government's quarterly budget deficit grew from 1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 1992 to 15 percent of GDP in the fourth quarter of 1992. It rose again during the first quarter of 1993; and it is only recently that the Russian central government has begun to get a handle on escalating government expenditures.

Thus, far from suffering *because* of tight monetary and fiscal policies, Russia is instead suffering from the absence of such policies. It is also suffering because of the government's failure to protect private-property rights adequately and because of high and punitive taxes that stifle entrepreneurship. All of which means that Russia today is suffering from high and hyper-inflation and a relative lack of new private-sector job opportunities.

As for price liberalization, it resulted in a one-time price increase of 250 percent and thus does not come anywhere close to accounting for Russia's annual inflation rate of more than 2,000 percent. It actually benefited Russian consumers, moreoever, since it restored the market equilibrium of supply and demand on the majority of goods, thereby eliminating most queues and shortages. Indeed, where price controls have not been eliminated—e.g., in the Russian energy sector—production is either stagnant or declining; and as a result, the Russian economy is losing billions of dollars.

2. Mr. Bukovsky insists that "nothing much" has been happening in Russia since the failed August 1991 coup.

Wrong. In fact, real and substantial progress has been made, most notably and most significantly in the indigenous Russian private sector, which has grown by leaps and bounds these past few years. For example, the number of private-sector farms in Russia has increased from a meager 1,000 in 1990 to more than 250,000 today. More than 50,000 small state enterprises have been privatized thus far; the process has gone so well that the privatization of small-scale enterprises is expected to be completed by the end of this year. Large-scale privatization is also well under way, with more than 2.4 million people, or 10 percent of Russia's industrial workforce, already working for privatized large enterprises. In the countryside, 15 percent of last fall's grain harvest was marketed, not through the old state-distribution system but rather through new private-sector commodities markets, which now number in the hundreds and are found throughout Russia. And more than 40 percent of the Russian people

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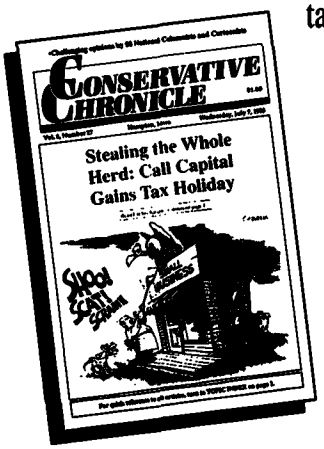

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now work either part- or full-time in the private sector, which accounts for at least 25 percent of Russian gross national product (GNP) and at least one-third of Russian nonagricultural GNP.

3. Boris Yeltsin's victory in the April 25 referendum, Mr. Bukovsky insists, was "hollow," because it did "nothing to resolve [Russia's] ongoing [political and economic] crisis."

Wrong. Far from being "hollow," Yeltsin's victory was instead a triumph for Russia's newly emerging entrepreneurial class and, indeed, for all who desire a more free and prosperous future for Russia; because it is Yeltsin and his administration that alone now in Russia stand for greater political democratization and economic liberalization. . . . In fact, the referendum has strengthened Yeltsin's hand vis-à-vis the hard-line Russian parliament. This, in turn, has allowed the Yeltsin administration to confront successfully the need to provide Russia with a new, more democratic, and more market-oriented constitution. Yeltsin published his draft of a new Russian constitution on April 30, less than one week after his resounding victory in the referendum; and he convened a constitutional assembly on June 5 for the purposes of finalizing and ratifying that draft.

This is enormously significant and a far cry from "hollow": because a new constitution will most definitely be a marked improvement on Russia's present-day constitution, which dates back to the Brezhnev era and which, therefore, does nothing to protect private-property rights and individual liberty. A new constitution, moreover, will most certainly provide for new parliamentary elections. It will thus disband the present-day Russian parliament, which came into power when the Communist party retained effective control over the nation's political institutions and administrative apparatus and which, therefore, has tended to be a reactionary force that works against greater change.

The referendum also has allowed the Yeltsin administration to push ahead with renewed vigor its program of mass privatization of industry. This program (Mr. Bukovsky to the contrary notwithstanding) has been an overwhelming success for a number of reasons, the most notable and most significant of which is that it has set in motion the process whereby scarce economic resources will be directed away from wasteful and profligate public-sector bureaucracies and back into private-sector hands.

JOHN R. GUARDIANO
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Vladimir Bukovsky's record as an impeccable anti-Communist fighter, his personal integrity, and his superb analytical mind make his criticism of Boris Yeltsin's government worthy of the utmost attention whether or not one agrees with his views.

Mr. Bukovsky admires the fighting Yeltsin, the man on the tank. However, he greatly underestimates Yeltsin's strength and courage of a different order, the political one. He also underrates the accomplishments of Yeltsin the builder.

In my view, what Russian reformers have managed to achieve in a very short time, historically speaking, is nothing short of a miracle. . . . They have eliminated the Communist party/KGB apparatus with its terrifying Soviet military machine and the largest military-industrial complex of all time; they have abandoned the Russian/Soviet empire and created a new mechanism for solving disputes among the former republics; and they have created all the major democratic institutions and a market economy.

Whether one likes it or not, Russia has been totally transformed. All its institutions—political, economic, legal, military, and cultural—have been changed and built anew, along the lines of other Western democracies. Ironically, the reformers have done all the things Mr. Bukovsky said they should have done, except for staging a grandiose Nuremberg trial. True, this has not been achieved in one month, but still it was done incredibly fast and, more important, democratically. As a result of such a prudent policy, the monumental transformation of Russia has been proceeding without arrests, show trials, public executions, civil unrest, famine, mass epidemics, millions of refugees flooding the West, significant terrorist activities, or massive layoffs.

Yet Mr. Bukovsky directs nothing but sarcasm and contempt at these people. He scorns a "certain Gaidar" who "learned something from [Milton] Friedman's books." He accuses the young reformers of "never having lived the life of an ordinary human being." He derides their "knowledge of economic life" for being "entirely bookish" and, incredibly, he even calls these men "the defeated forces of the past."

After two years of studying the current Russian revolution I can assure Mr. Bukovsky that the core Russian reformers are a most remarkable group of highly intelligent and educated political men. They have rightfully earned the admiration and respect of all Western specialists intimately familiar with them. President Yeltsin demonstrated a rare political courage in entrusting these outstanding yet unknown young men with the power to rebuild the country. Of course they made mistakes, but, contrary to Mr. Bukovsky, these were minor mistakes, not "colossal blunders." One of them was the privatization of state property. I agree that it was too slow and I, for one, suggested a much more expedient and broader-based privatization. Still, privatization in Russia has been one of the most robust in the entire post-Communist world despite the unprecedented degree of centralization, militarization, and monopolization of the Soviet economy.

In Mr. Bukovsky's view, Yeltsin's main "colossal blunder" was his "cozy cohabitation with the Communists." The former human-rights champion suggests that Yeltsin should have purged the *nomenklatura* right after the failed putsch. But not only is this suggestion to purge what he calls "dead wood" morally appalling, it is also notoriously impractical: what are the criteria, and who would be left to do the rebuilding?

Yeltsin resisted the temptation to use the Bolsheviks' own methods in dealing with the "dead wood," not because he is "weak and indecisive" but because it is impossible to build democracy by undemocratic methods. Instead, he opted for giving everybody, including the apparatchiks, a second chance. He relied on his knowledge of human nature, hoping that such powerful incentives as the free market and private ownership would disinter the people's constructive powers.

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He was right most of the time: many thousands of former apparatchiks are making a successful transition. In fact, such a star among democrats as Boris Nemtsov, governor of the Nizhni Novgorod region, has claimed that former apparatchiks are much more efficient in implementing reforms than former dissidents.

Mr. Bukovsky's insistence on an uncompromising treatment of the party/KGB/state *nomenklatura* seems to stem from his perception of human nature. He underestimates the extent to which people can change. For him even Gaidar, to say nothing of Yeltsin, is unable to think and act democratically because he is "an offspring of the old *nomenklatura* dead wood." But this flies in the face of most theories of political behavior and Mr. Bukovsky's own life experience. People do change, and change constantly. They believe in God, then they stop; they believe in Communism until they learn enough about it and its alternatives. People can be broken and come out strong again.

Some fundamental beliefs are indeed very stubborn and hard to change. Certain attitudes and operational styles (particularly authoritarian ones) also tend to persist throughout the lives of both apparatchiks and dissidents. Yet many political beliefs change relatively easily, especially under the combined pressure of compelling evidence and rapidly changing life circumstances.

Strangely, Mr. Bukovsky often sounds like the very same people he suggests getting rid of. What has happened to his impeccable logic and insight? He used to be one of the best Sovietologists in the West, so how could he commit such a "colossal blunder" as to call the April referendum "Yeltsin's hollow victory"?

This and many other post-Communist articles of Vladimir Bukovsky clearly show what a great gap has developed between the human-rights fighter and his people. The support the Russian people gave their president and his reforms refutes Mr. Bukovsky's allegation of "the general apathy of a demoralized population." Clearly, the people whose rights he once so selflessly defended have moved ahead from the demolition of the totalitarian system toward the rebuilding of their lives and the country, while he has remained a dissident. It is sad to see one of the best sons of Russia so bitter and disillusioned. . . .

DMITRY MIKHEYEV
Hudson Institute
Indianapolis, Indiana

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Vladimir Bukovksy's article starts as a defense of Boris Yeltsin, apparently aimed at refuting incorrect perceptions of him and his supporters as "unpredictable," "unbalanced," or even "dangerous." Yet the second part of the article not only confirms all these allegedly false assumptions, but in fact adds more arguments against the Russian president. . . .

Mr. Bukovsky's interpretation of events in Russia is that of an uncompromising radical—something he has been famous for from his early days as a Russian dissident. In his eyes the ultimate sin of Yeltsin and his supporters is that they failed to launch a full-scale revolution. When Mr. Bukovsky offers his own prescriptions—ban the Communists, "purge the *nomenklatura*," expose the crimes of the Communist regime, "preferably in an open trial or a public inquiry," etc.—we recognize his heartfelt views. (The term "open trial" is remarkable in itself, revealing certain patterns of thinking that are peculiar to all representatives of *Homo Sovieticus*, whether they are for or against Communism.) But, from a conservative perspective, does Russia really need another revolution?

Some of Mr. Bukovsky's passages have a distinctly epic flavor, as when he writes that

> for the first time in almost 75 years of ruthless Communist rule, the people were openly challenging the regime in a nonviolent but forceful way. This popular impulse, uniting all nations and social groups in a determination to regain their dignity and liberate *themselves*, was priceless. [Emphasis added]

And this was written at a time when Yeltsin and his highbrow advisers were taking advantage of the unprecedented freedom given them by Gorbachev, doing their best to undermine any authority in the country, scheming, using demagoguery and all sorts of dirty tricks

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to pull off a palace coup in Moscow.

This "popular impulse" failed, largely because Yeltsin had nothing to offer except denunciations of Gorbachev. There was no constructive program for rebuilding the country and, as Mr. Bukovsky himself admits, the "oppositional structures were weak and inexperienced," therefore incapable of providing a viable alternative to the old bureaucracy. Then, too, we must remember that intellectuals, by definition, are not fit to govern, as Paul Johnson convincingly tells us in a recent book, an observation confirmed by all the post-coup developments in Russia. . . .

For Mr. Bukovsky, a true Russian intellectual himself, the culprits are not the intellectuals but the *nomenklatura*. He makes an effort to ascribe the failures of the Gaidar government to the fact that his cabinet consisted of former Communists and apparatchiks, which sounds truly amazing to anyone who knows the situation in Russia even remotely. Gaidar and his team, "young, energetic, liberal-minded children of the *nomenklatura*," always were and still are the darlings of the Moscow intelligentsia. The *nomenklatura* has nothing to do with this, and if it does, then the whole political elite in Russia, starting with Gorbachev and Yeltsin, belong to this glorious breed which is still in business.

Distinctions should be based not on erstwhile political affiliations (there was only one possible affiliation—*Communist*) or parental heritage but on skills and capabilities or, at least, political instincts. By this token alone, Gorbachev, his socialist world view notwithstanding, is head and shoulders above the Yeltsin clique. Yeltsin's actions, with the conspicuous exception of climbing a tank—and Mr. Bukovsky confirms this—bespeak a total absence of any political instincts. His appointment of Gaidar as Prime Minister, as well as his subsequent betrayal of Gaidar, shows just that.

Mr. Bukovsky concedes that Yeltsin's (or Gaidar's) reforms were, indeed, an unmitigated disaster. . . . If anyone can be blamed for this debacle, it is not the *nomenklatura* but only Yeltsin himself, together with the Moscow liberal establishment and its Western advisers, like Jeffrey Sachs. For Yeltsin and his allies, "shock therapy" and "privatization" were purely political moves aimed at destroying the *nomenklatura* or stripping it of the remaining economic levers of power—a prime example of Yeltsin's opportunism. These moves were bound to fail, for reasons very succinctly put forth by Mr. Bukovsky. . . .

In the end, all the contradictory and conflicting statements made by Vladimir Bukovsky do not lead to any remedies, as might have been expected. Ironically, . . . his article confirms, contrary to all his radical prescriptions, that the one thing Russia needs is—*order*. This might mean a temporary setback for some overly radical endeavors, but only when order and the rule of law are firmly established can anyone hope for any improvements in Russia.

VLADIMIR OSHEROV
Westmont, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I quite agree with Vladimir Bukovsky that there is little hope for Russia, at least for the present generation, and that territorial disintegration is going to take its course. I do not see, however, why Boris Yeltsin should be blamed for this. Despite his numerous shortcomings, he has shown unusual political sagacity.

First of all, Yeltsin must be credited with securing a legitimate government for Russia after the collapse of Soviet power. Were it not for the presidential elections of June 1991, the situation in Russia would be even more unruly than it is now. Since at that time it was impossible to hold such elections without Gorbachev's approval, Yeltsin made a compromise with his personal enemy, something that should be appreciated rather than sneered at.

Mr. Bukovsky reproaches Yeltsin for accepting responsibility for the Russian and Soviet imperial heritage. Russians, Mr. Bukovsky says, have no such responsibility since they suffered more than others under Soviet rule. A similar point was made by some Germans after the defeat of Hitler. The problems of self-inflicted wounds are not easily solved, but self-deceit is not very helpful, either. The key to Russia's problems is moral rather than pragmatic: what to do with the country that is little more than a graveyard of its own people killed by their own government?

I understand Mr. Bukovsky's desire to have in Russia a working parliamentary government, a market economy, and an honest entrepreneurial class. But to blame Yeltsin for not making all this happen is not quite reasonable. The truth is that such objectives are not realistic in Russia as it is now. I do not need to explain why, since Mr. Bukovsky has already done so in his article.

Evidently no government in Moscow is able to govern the territory it claims. Yeltsin seems to understand this, and it is to his credit that the bitter and dangerous split between Russia and Ukraine has not developed into open war. Yet the time of troubles has only just started, and what is needed now are inconsistent compromises and halfway solutions rather than grand political designs. For some time, Russians will have to live without victories and victors to worship.

Yeltsin is not a very attractive figure. He is jumpy, he drinks too much, and, having been brought up in the party apparatus, he probably does not understand how a formal democracy works. In all this he is very much like ordinary Russians, and although he is not worshiped, he is trusted more than others are. It is quite heartening to see the Russians putting their trust in someone who does not intimidate them.

The most important thing about the referendum was that the Russians turned up at the polls to support Yeltsin, knowing very well that he was not going to help them in any significant way. This was an impressive demonstration of patriotism, living proof that Russia will be resurrected one day, though perhaps not in the near future. We may only hope that it will be a Russia that is different from the one we have known.

WISLA SURAZSKA
University of Bergen
Bergen, Norway

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Vladimir Bukovsky's article was of the high caliber one might expect from this sensitive observer . . . and many thoughtful Russians undoubtedly share his despair at the shortcomings he catalogues so thoroughly. . . . Yet there are two hopeful and immensely significant developments which . . . Mr. Bukovsky ignores in his article: the trend toward constitutional democracy and the equally hopeful

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trend toward the formation of political parties.

Mr. Bukovsky dismisses . . . Russia's budding constitutionalism rather too hastily, suggesting that "bickering over obscure constitutional subtleties" does not matter a kopeck to people way out in the hinterland (or, for that matter, to anyone else, either). Yet the experience of many democratic countries shows clearly that without a respected fundamental law underlying all social, economic, and political institutions . . . a country is doomed to drift, . . . just as Russia is drifting today.

I have examined the texts of two draft proposals for a new Russian constitution currently being considered (one by Yeltsin and the second "Rumyantsev" draft, which was prepared in parliament) and come to the conclusion that once the country adopts a consensual document whose wording stands somewhere between these two drafts, Russia stands a very good chance of proudly taking its place in the world as a constitutional democracy. . . .

As for political parties, Mr. Bukovsky declines to mention that one reason Russian politics are so helter-skelter—with an undue emphasis on individual personalities and often capricious political behavior—is the fact that political parties in Russia are still in an embryonic stage.

One thing we have learned from modern political practice is that if groups espousing differing views do not crystallize into formal political parties, chaos is likely to ensue. Mr. Bukovsky might have devoted some of his analytical skills to this question, noting how anarchy and endless squabbling are the predictable by-products of the political vacuum stemming from an absence of such parties. . . .

We learn from American history that political parties do not spring full-blown from the heads of "founding fathers." Rather, they evolve gradually after an earlier phase of one-to-one competition among political rivals (the Aaron Burr-Alexander Hamilton duel springs to mind, among other examples). Parties evolve more readily, moreover, if the political structure, bolstered and fertilized by constitutionalism, provides them with the framework or "soil" in which to develop and flourish.

Finally, I am by no means as despairing as Mr. Bukovsky appears to be on the question of how long it will take Russia to get on its feet, and this view is shared by a number of well-informed and well-intentioned Russians with whom I am in contact. Mr. Bukovsky believes that the only chance of renewal rests with the younger generation, but my own assessment is more optimistic. The Russian troika may now be racing wildly down a steep slope, but its momentum will carry it up a new slope and onto a more level plateau. Once having arrived there, Russia will prosper.

True, it may become fragmented in the end, and come to look more like a confederation than a federation. . . . But as long as the populace remains committed to political democracy, to a mixed economy based on a free market and private ownership and management in industry and agriculture, Russia is bound to find its way. . . . A place so well-endowed with natural resources and with a people of such boundless energy and resourcefulness cannot be written off so easily.

ALBERT L. WEEKS
Sarasota, Florida

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY writes:

Usually, I enjoy a good argument with those whose views differ from mine, not just because it is entertaining, but mostly because it helps me to sharpen my arguments even further. What I dislike, for this very reason, is a need to reply to those who either distort my views and try to put in my mouth things I did not say, or try to "categorize" me as someone I definitely am not. In both cases, I am left with the boring task of repeating myself time and again while wondering: did my opponents do it on purpose, or did they not have time to read carefully what I wrote?

The latter must be true of John R. Guardiano, who is "so wildly off-base, so blatantly erroneous, so gravely mistaken" in his account of my article that, with all the enthusiasm and zeal of a novice, he rushes to administer a "complete and total thrashing" to arguments he himself has invented. I feel indebted to Mr. Guardiano for giving us a short introductory lecture on the basics of the market economy, but, somehow, I do not recall inviting him to be a co-author of my article.

Did I write that Russia "is suffering from Polish-style economic 'shock therapy'"? Did I define it as "price liberalization and tight monetary and fiscal policies"? Wrong, Mr. Guardiano. Not only did I not "insist" on such nonsense, I actually said the opposite. The whole point of my section on Yegor Gaidar's "reforms" is that he, not I, defined them in such a way, totally ignoring the absence of a private sector as well as other differences between the Russian and Polish economies. It was precisely my argument that Gaidar, being what he was, never understood either the meaning of Polish-style "shock therapy" or the essence of the market economy, and therefore offered no therapy, only a shock. What Gaidar tried between January and June of 1992 was simply a mockery of Polish reforms, not unlike the "liberal" doctor from an old joke about a lunatic asylum, who encourages his patients to dive into a newly-built swimming pool, and even promises to fill the pool with water in the future, if they prove to be good at diving.

Mr. Guardiano writes:

> Thus, far from suffering *because* of tight monetary and fiscal policies, Russia is instead suffering from the absence of such policies. It is also suffering because of the government's failure to protect private-property rights adequately and because of high and punitive taxes that stifle entrepreneurship.

Right, Mr. Guardiano. Bravo, Mr. Guardiano! But did I say anything to the contrary? Wrong, Mr. Guardiano. For what was that mysterious "government" which did all those naughty things: failed to protect private-property rights while fixing taxes on a Swedish scale? It was Gaidar's government, Mr. Guardiano. And it was Gaidar, not the Russian Central Bank, who reverted to massive subsidies for the loss-making state enterprises in the summer of 1992 after *his* style of "shock therapy" had brought the entire Russian economy to the brink of bankruptcy. So much for his "tight monetarism," which Mr. Guardiano seems to take at face value.

Indeed, it is only in the West that Gaidar, Yavlinsky, Popov, *et al.* can pass for Milton Friedman's followers simply because they say they are. True, they love to use an appropriate "market" jargon, particularly in public and especially when

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talking to the IMF. That, however, does not mean they either understand the free market or are truly converted. Just a few years ago they were equally eager to parrot socialist mumbo-jumbo, and tomorrow they will happily switch to Swahili if it should be convenient.

Are they "intellectuals," as Vladimir Osherov insists? This term is very misleading for a Western reader. A few "misfits" aside, there are no intellectuals in the traditional sense in Russia. What we have there is a new breed of the intelligentsia—the latter-day *nomenklatura*, the end-product of the Communist experiment. They are opportunists with no beliefs or convictions, and no concern for anything but themselves.

We in the former Soviet Union knew all along that—as a political joke popular in the early 60's had it—honesty, intelligence, and membership in the Communist party could not possibly be reconciled in the same individual. So, contrary to Dmitry Mikheyev's own theory (and all the "theories of political behavior" notwithstanding), the Communist *nomenklatura* did not suddenly wise up in August 1991, turning to democracy and the free market "under pressure of compelling evidence." In fact, most of them did not believe in Communism in the first place or, indeed, in anything but their own political power. Under pressure of the growing political crisis, the party split into two uneven groups: while a minority of clinical idiots went on marching under the red banner, the cynical majority quickly turned into "reformers," "democrats," "nationalists," and "free-marketeers."

Surely, even in the West people could guess that Slobodan Milosevic did not turn into an ardent Serbian nationalist as a result of profound soul-searching. Nor, for that matter, did former Politburo members like Leonid Kravchuk, Eduard Shevardnadze, Geidar Aliev, and Algidas Brzazuskas—to say nothing of all those aging Komsomol fuehrers, KGB officers, and provincial party bureaucrats who today constitute the bulk of Russia's ruling "elite"—get religion on the road to Damascus. Far from experiencing a change of heart, they simply went through a change of color, like so many chameleons.

Accordingly, most of them regard recent events in Russia not as a revolution liberating the people from totalitarian oppression and requiring a vision of a conceptually different future, but rather as a natural continuation of their careers within the same old hierarchy. Clinging to power with Lenin-like tenacity, they will never allow anything new and healthy to prosper in Russia because they do not see a need for anything new and healthy. Democracy means for them nothing more than a new field for deception and manipulation, just as the market economy amounts in their eyes only to one thing: *corruption*. Consequently, they will always treat any genuine private initiative as corruption, while justifying their own corruption by the workings of the market economy.

In short, all they are capable of creating is a new mafia in place of the old one, a political system which, for lack of a better word, one might call "kleptocracy." Nor do they conceal this. On the contrary, in a bizarre confusion of Marxist and market thinking, so typical of Russia today, they claim that "all capitalist countries" initially had to pass through a "wild" stage of plunder and lawlessness (Karl Marx's "primitive accumulation") before developing into something more decent.

One of these "reformers," the former Mayor of Moscow, Gavriil Popov, has even created his own "theory," according to which bureaucrats "in the time of transition" should be allowed to take bribes and encouraged to "have a share in private businesses." This, he argues, will make them friends of economic reform rather than its enemies—or, to borrow Mr. Mikheyev's phrase, will help their "successful transition" by "disintering" their "constructive powers" through the "powerful incentives" of the free market. This is exactly the "third way" the "reformers" love to talk about, a "third way" which the Czech Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus has aptly described as a "way leading directly to the third world."

Clearly, if Mr. Mikheyev does not know that in recent years the Communist *nomenklatura* consisted of unscrupulous opportunists rather than dogmatic Marxists and revolutionary sailors, he did not learn much in his "two years of studying." And since the latter were already purged long before I was born, thus depriving me of that pleasure, am I to assume that I "sound" like the former?

THERE is hardly anything more futile than to defend oneself against personal attacks thinly disguised as "arguments" in a dispute. If nothing else, the mere need to do so is already degrading because it places you in the dock and makes you look half-guilty. Besides, as we say in Russia, it is virtually impossible to prove that one is not a camel. So what should I do? Should I accept a plea-bargain and admit to being half a camel? Or should I stoop to the level of my opponent and attack his character? Either way I lose.

Mr. Mikheyev must know that stereotyping dissidents as "fanatical" and "intransigent" neo-Bolsheviks was, and still is, the tactic most often used by those in the Soviet Union who chose to collaborate with the Communist regime: they could not otherwise bring themselves to look into a mirror.

Moreover, I am sure he must know that, far from insisting on "an uncompromising treatment of the party/KGB/state *nomenklatura*" (let alone on arrests, show trials, and public executions), I actually advocated total forgiveness of even KGB informers right after the August coup, in a televised discussion with the then-KGB chief Vadim Bakatin.

Yet it is one thing to forgive your defeated and repentant enemies, and quite a different story if you allow them to rule the country again, totally unrepentant of their past crimes. While the first is called "tolerance" and can help heal the country's wounds, the second is, indeed, a "hollow victory" or even a "defeat" in that it leads to an attempt at a *restoration* of the old regime.

I wish Mr. Mikheyev were right in claiming that "Russia has been totally transformed," and that "all its institutions—political, economic, legal, military, and cultural—have been changed and built anew, along the lines of other Western democracies." *All* of them? Including the Supreme Soviet and the district and local Soviets? Including the legal system, with its "people's courts," with its two "people's assessors," with judges and prosecutors subordinated to the Soviets? Including the KGB, which has simply been renamed the MBR? Including the Central Bank, which is printing and changing money at

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the behest of the Supreme Soviet? Including the media, which are still either state-owned or state-subsidized?

I am afraid that not even Boris Yeltsin would agree with Mr. Mikheyev. And even Gaidar would laugh if he read that his government had "eliminated . . . the largest military-industrial complex of all time," or that it had "created all the major democratic institutions and a market economy." For if that were true, where did the crisis come from? Why did Yeltsin sacrifice this "most remarkable group of highly intelligent and educated political men" at the end of 1992? Was it just another fit of his "rare political courage"? Or was it because he would not have left himself a single chance if he had given a "second chance" to the former party apparatchiks?

In other words, purging the former *nomenklatura* from positions of power was (and still is) a bare political necessity, not an act of revenge. The lack of good specialists without party backgrounds is just a poor excuse: even in its heyday, party membership never exceeded 7 percent of the population, while the *nomenklatura* numbered fewer than three million. Besides, what is a good specialist? Does it not imply a certain degree of personal integrity?

As against what Mr. Mikheyev thinks, it is far more "impractical" to promote than to dismiss these people, unless we want them to "rebuild" the old Soviet regime in all its glory. What else are they real experts at? What else but a perversion of justice can we expect from the same judges who used to convict us for "anti-Soviet activity" and who are still presiding in the Russian courts? Are we surprised that they have turned to corruption?

Just as I am writing these lines, news comes of the reappointment of Professor G.M. Morozov as honorary director of the Serbsky Institute for Forensic Psychiatry in Moscow. This is the very same Professor Morozov who diagnosed us dissidents as schizophrenics in the 1960's and 70's. Clearly, Yeltsin's administration could not possibly find a better man for the task of "rebuilding" Russian psychiatry. And this appointment is wonderfully "practical," too—about as practical as choosing Dr. Mengele to head a children's hospital because of a lack of good pediatricians.

To be sure, there is a moral issue here, but it is somewhat different from the one Mr. Mikheyev raises. Thus, in my humble view, to retire the former *nomenklatura* from government service is no more "undemocratic" or "morally appalling" than was the denazification process in postwar Germany or the lustration law in the Czech Republic today. Even calling it a "purge" is not quite correct. After all, every new U.S. President makes about 5,000 new appointments, and certainly not from among the ranks of his opponent's followers.

But what is truly "morally appalling" is to see the perpetrators of the 1991 putsch walk free from the courtroom in Moscow without even a proper trial, and to see KGB murderers celebrated as the heroes of present-day Russian democracy. One of them, the former KGB general Oleg Kalugin, recently published an interview in a popular British newspaper under the proud heading, "I Organized Markov's Execution," in which he recounts his role in the 1978 London murder (by a poison-tipped umbrella) of a Bulgarian dissident. Nor does Kalugin feel the slightest remorse. His action, he believes, was justified by the fact that to disobey the order from his boss Andropov "would have been suicidal," as if exactly this defense had not already been rejected in the trials of his German counterparts at Nuremberg 45 years ago.

Others are hardly better. Be they, like the present Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and quite a few of his generals, the proud heroes of the Afghan slaughter; or, like Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, the best organizers of Brezhnev's "stagnation" period—whoever they are, none of them feels the slightest responsibility for what he has done. Why should they, if they were all just carrying out the orders of their superiors?

The massacre of Polish officers in the Katyn Forest may have been condemned at Nuremberg as a crime against humanity, yet the man who signed the order, NKVD official Petr Soprunenko, is living peacefully in Moscow as an old-age pensioner. So are Dmitri Kopylansky, Raul Wallenberg's MGB interrogator, and General Pavel Sudoplatov, Trotsky's murderer, to name just a few. Are we to forgive them all, without even a court hearing? Are we to accept what the world firmly rejected 45 years ago?

This is what *I* call "morally appalling": the double standards we seem to accept so easily. Why, may I ask, is murdering in the name of National Socialism a crime against humanity while murdering in the name of International Socialism is not? Why did Rudolf Hess die in Spandau prison, whereas Boris Ponomarev can live out his last years in a comfortable Moscow apartment? Is there no limit to our hypocrisy? No sooner is some bloody monster like the former East Germany's Erich Honecker put on trial than many of the same people who applaud hunting down elderly Nazi war criminals are up in arms pleading in the name of humanity his old age and poor health. If those are our moral standards, why are we so shocked by the atrocities committed in Bosnia? What else did we expect from the former Communist leaders of the former Yugoslavia?

THOSE Russians who believe that the crimes, lies, and injustices perpetrated in the former Soviet Union can be brushed aside like so many crumbs from a table—that we can step over the mountains of corpses and rivers of blood, and carry on as if nothing happened—are at best extremely naive and at worst extremely dishonest and indifferent to the future of their country. Moral recovery in the former Communist countries is certainly more important than economic recovery, as the second is hardly achievable without the first. And the first is not possible without some kind of Nuremberg-type judgment. I hasten to assure Vladimir Osherov that the expression "open trial" reveals no more peculiar patterns in my case than it did in the case of Harry Truman.

Nor, on the other side, do I see where in my writings Wisla Surazska discovered my perfidious plan to absolve all Russians of any responsibility. But simply proclaiming all Russians to be the *only* "legal heirs" of all Communist crimes is wrong (surely, Solzhenitsyn is somewhat less responsible for them than General Jaruzelski), and it can help moral recovery in Russia pretty much as the Versailles Treaty helped it in Germany. Healing a nation's 75-year-long trauma requires a moral judgment which is both harsh and just. This was the biggest and the most important task posed to the new Russian leadership, and Yeltsin's fail-

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ure even to address it was his biggest blunder.

In fact, it was not so much a blunder as (rather like his decision to opt for a compromise with the *nomenklatura* in April 1991) a deliberate choice determined by his own political origins and psychological limitations. Both could be called blunders only from the standpoint of history: while the one left him without supporting structures (and left the country with the "political vacuum" and "chaos" described by Albert L. Weeks), the other resulted in his loss of power, plunging the country into a political crisis.

At present, Yeltsin's power does not extend beyond the Kremlin walls, very much as it was with Gorbachev at the end. Writing a constitution is a poor substitute for a political victory. The Weimar Republic's constitution was one of the best in its time, and yet it failed to stop Hitler. Kerensky and his ministers spent eight months writing the most democratic constitution on earth, but they could not even complete it. Yeltsin's constitution is far from perfect (the famous "social rights" are still there, as they were under socialism), but in any event it cannot be made into law unless he defeats his opponents first. And this is precisely what he could not bring himself to do in the first place.

Despite what Miss Surazska may think, "inconsistent compromises and halfway solutions" can only aggravate the crisis, not resolve it. The political graveyards are filled with the corpses of those who tried to go that way, Mikhail Gorbachev's being just the most recent. This is precisely why I do not feel particularly "heartened" by the fact that Yeltsin is "very much like ordinary Russians." Does Miss Surazska feel the same warmth for that ordinary Pole, Lech Walesa? The tragedy of our countries is that the very ordinary people who have inherited power in extraordinary times are unfit to resolve the extraordinary problems of our history. This is what my article was about, no need to explain it to me.

FINALLY, tiresome as it may be, let me set my own record straight. Let me remind my opponents that I was one of the first to welcome Yeltsin, warts and all, as the "only credible leader of the democratic opposition in Russia" and "for at least as long as the party continues to play a significant role" (see my article, "Born Again and Again," in the *New Republic* of September 10-17, 1990). Furthermore, I have supported him ever since, and even as recently as April of this year I went to Moscow at the request of his campaign managers to support him publicly in the referendum.

Now, those who want to find inconsistencies for the sake of advancing their own arguments will find them even in the multiplication tables. I personally see no more inconsistency in my position on Yeltsin than in my having voted for John Major in last year's British general elections. It is a matter of opting for the lesser evil whenever no better choice is available, and it has not blinded me to Major's blunders.

Nor does having voted for him make me an ardent Major supporter, any more than the referendum's results mean that the Russian people are Yeltsin enthusiasts. In both cases, the election demonstrates a firm rejection of the offered alternative. In the case of Russia, it proves that the people will not accept any "order" just for the sake of it, Mr. Osherov's opinion notwithstanding.

Is this a "living proof that Russia will be resurrected one day"? I doubt it. As I wrote in the *New Republic* article mentioned above:

> In the final analysis, for all his many lives, and however unfairly, Boris Yeltsin may be no more than a transitional figure in the Soviet Union. . . . Only a figure of impeccable moral authority can lead the country to its spiritual recovery after so many decades of lies and crimes.

PC in the Academy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carol Iannone ["PC With a Human Face," June] says that in my book, *Politics by Other Means*, I "deplore" Allan Bloom's atheism and "accuse him thereby of being un-American." I am an atheist, and I see no contradiction between religious unbelief and democratic faith. The word "un-American" I have never used in any context since it is serviceable only for slander.

A paragraph of my book contains the following proposition: (1) that individuality and liberty of conscience are American ideas; (2) that the ideas have roots in

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Christianity and Romanticism; and (3) that Bloom, an ironist regarding the American mind, was also a skeptic regarding those ideas. I do not go the whole length of his skepticism.

"Religious belief," affirms Miss Iannone, "is at the base of American democracy." Even if I agreed, I would take this to be an empty boast unless the believer were willing to reduce her theory to a practice, name a panel of adepts renowned for their piety, and write us a national liturgy.

DAVID BROMWICH
North Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "PC With a Human Face" Carol Iannone asserts, "A couple of years ago, the term 'political correctness' . . . suddenly became a pejorative description. . . ." Not so. For years, libertarian radicals have made the same ironic use of the term to disparage authoritarians on the Left. Since the early 80's, for instance, feminists who support sexual freedom and oppose censorship have characterized anti-pornography orthodoxy as an attempt to impose standards of "politically correct" sex.

Miss Iannone further accuses the Union of Democratic Intellectuals (UDI), to which I belong, of "justifying" political correctness. In fact, we oppose political and moral authoritarianism, whatever its source. Miss Iannone might be interested to know that when George Bush's nominations to the National Endowment for the Humanities advisory council were discussed at a joint UDI-Teachers for a Democratic Culture conference on the culture wars, I and other UDI members condemned the MLA's campaign to scuttle her candidacy on the grounds of her supposedly inferior credentials. In our view, not only was the campaign a wretched excess of academic snobbery, it was in bad faith, since the MLA's real objection was not to Miss Iannone's qualifications but to her politics. We too had a political objection to the panel of NEH nominees, but not to any individual; rather, we opposed the systematic exclusion of dissenters from the Bush/Cheney party line—right-wing PC, as it were.

UDI also protested the decision of the National Institutes of Health to succumb to political pressure from black and mental-health activists and withdraw financing for a conference on the link between genetics and crime. While we profoundly disagreed with the premises of the proposed conference, we saw the case as analogous to the politically inspired veto of National Endowment for the Arts grants to Karen Finley and other controversial artists—a violation of the principle that in a democratic society, public funds for intellectual and artistic activity should not be contingent on political conformity of any sort.

In short, we value freedom, not "correctness." We do, however, accuse the Right of using charges of PC as a smear tactic to discredit and dismiss any leftist criticism of the present social order, particularly the idea that there is a systemic imbalance of power between men and women or blacks and whites. By branding such criticism "politically correct," opponents imply that it is inherently the product of blind orthodoxy, not of thought, and that it necessarily goes along with a desire to "intimidate and silence" dissenters. Conservatives are thereby relieved of any need to debate these ideas on their merits. As someone who has been a target from both directions, I don't see that it's any less intimidating to be called totalitarian for arguing that institutional racism and sexism exist than to be called racist or sexist for disagreeing with some item of prevailing black or feminist opinion.

ELLEN WILLIS
New York University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In her article, Carol Iannone correctly says cultural leftists attempt "to expose the political assumptions behind the givens of our culture" and that they claim their ostensibly apolitical "adversaries are equally political, only without realizing or admitting it." In rebuttal, she implies that it is possible to oppose the politicization of humanistic education from a nonpolitical viewpoint. Perhaps this *is* possible, and even desirable; unfortunately, neither Miss Iannone nor any of her conservative allies I have encountered can be taken seriously as exemplars of such a nonpolitical or even nonpartisan viewpoint (though in their own minds "conservative" seems somehow to be equated with "nonpolitical").

There is an approximate parity of folly on both sides of the culture wars, but conservatives are uniquely comical in crowing about being the defenders of disinterested critical values. . . . Conservatives would gain more credibility if they dropped this pretense of nonpartisanship and openly argued for the superiority of right-wing over left-wing cultural politics.

Miss Iannone, don't you and many other conservatives, like the leftists you attack, make "the same reductive and ideologically driven points over and over again"? Can you honestly declare with such certitude that there is nothing of merit in any work by any leftist? And can you find no faults in conservative criticism?

My own studies of the most prominent cultural conservatives' writings show them to be riddled with shoddy research and ignorant misreadings, malicious misrepresentations, and wrenching of quotes out of context. . . .

Miss Iannone's misreading of the passages she cites by Gerald Graff and Andrew Ross typifies the contortions conservatives go through to present every leftist text in the worst possible light. Graff argues that sophisticated critical methods can be applied to works of popular culture as well as to the classics, and that a well-conceived Marxist or homosexual study of the former might be more worthwhile than yet one more pedantically conventional work on Shakespeare or Tolstoy. Miss Iannone distorts this argument into a preference for teaching trash and for replacing scholarly with political standards, thus ruling out *a priori* the possibility of substantial leftist scholarship in either the classical canon or mass culture. She reduces the broad range of topics and ideas in Ross's *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (which, incidentally, argues against PC) to a travesty. Her other caricatures bear little resemblance to critics such as those anthologized in my *American Media and Mass Culture: Left Perspectives* (University of California Press).

Miss Iannone presents an equally crude picture of Richard Rorty and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. by pulling a few passages out of the context of the works she cites. Rorty reconciles epistemological anti-foundationalism with Deweyan pragmatism and political modera-

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tion, defending American society, foreign policy, and traditional education against extreme leftists. Gates rejects "essentialism" but delineates black cultural traditions that have gone unrecognized in mainstream scholarship. Miss Iannone simply ignores their careful reasoning, in these and other works, in support of what she glibly derides as self-contradictions.

Miss Iannone is upset that recent scholars study "literature as politics, literature as sociology, literature as mass cultural analysis, literature as anything other than literature." But she fails to explain how or why literary study should be isolated from these other fields. (Isn't overspecialization a concern of conservatives as well as leftists?) In any case, COMMENTARY is a peculiar place for such a judgment to appear, with its history of publishing classic studies in all those "anything others" by critics like Robert Warshow, Leslie Fiedler, Paul Goodman, Lionel Trilling, and Norman Podhoretz (author of *The Bloody Crossroads: Where Literature and Politics Meet*). . . .

Miss Iannone and many other conservative critics display mind-boggling *chutzpah* in their claim to be defending intellectual standards against vulgar leftists while their own careers seem to consist mainly of vulgarizing the complex ideas of Left scholars at the level of tabloid journalism. Much academic leftism can be legitimately criticized, but these conservatives seem too blinded by their own dogma to be able to get their criticisms right. By resorting to misrepresentation and oversimplification as a means of evading the substantive issues raised by leftists, they only lend credibility to the leftist case.

DONALD LAZERE
San Luis Obispo, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carol Iannone is right on target. (If only we had someone like her on the National Endowment for the Humanities. Alas!) My only criticism is that she is not nearly hard enough on Gerald Graff, who not only wants to have his cake (PC) and eat it too (as a "responsible moderate"), but wants to have students partake of his half-baked goods ("teach the conflicts").

Why aren't we similarly "teaching the conflicts" in a wide variety of disciplines? Where is creationism provided as a useful counterpoint to evolution? Why not palmistry or phrenology as "another perspective" on human personality alongside psychology? These conflicts exist and therefore we must find able spokesmen for them in order to develop students' appreciation for the "democratic debate" so dear to the hearts of Teachers for a Democratic Culture.

No amount of finesse or rhetoric changes the fact that academia has become hopelessly politicized. Every utterance or act is construed as a political gesture with tremendous ramifications for the liberation of "oppressed peoples." (This group seems to include everyone *except* straight white males who aren't disabled or senile.) PC cannot have a human face because it denies a human nature: that which is abiding in *Homo sapiens* rather than the accidental outcome of circumstances—genetic or environmental—like race or gender or class or sexual preference.

LLOYD B. LEWIS
Savannah College of Art and Design
Savannah, Georgia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Carol Iannone's article accurately analyzes the attempt by critics James Atlas, David Bromwich, and other self-styled mediators to find the "liberal center" of campus politics, but Miss Iannone has perhaps underplayed the role of university administrators in advancing a radical agenda. She cites Bromwich's account of Henry Rosovsky of Harvard, who by "evasion and concession" and by having "acquiesced in its demands" gives "credence" to the movement. But many administrators have chosen even more active postures than this in shaping the political academy.

The perception of many well-meaning administrators is that disputes over the university curriculum are reducible to a single axis. One is either for minority justice or against it. Never considering the problem of the means chosen for the desired end, they feel that any resistance to their specific programs is the equivalent of a morally repugnant denial of any minority presence at the university. Thus, Dartmouth president James Freedman, a lawyer and former law clerk to Justice Thurgood Marshall, said in an interview in the *Christian Science Monitor* not too long ago that accusations of political correctness are no more than a conservative "reaction to efforts of communities like ours to attract minorities." According to Freedman, charges that the great works of the Western tradition have been replaced by an ethnicity quotient are "overstated." He claims that

> changes in the reading list are natural. In the 50's we read Camus and Kierkegaard and Sartre. . . . Freud was everywhere. I suppose that was the "PC" at the time. Faculty assign what they find intellectually important and suggestive. Why is it such a big issue today, if it wasn't then?

I find this statement as revealing as it is disturbing. Freedman is equating the organic process of intellectual change with the coercive imposition of approved documents. He does not acknowledge that the faculty wish to assign "what they find intellectually important and suggestive" is precisely what the campus thought-police find objectionable in the first place. Faculty freedom to follow thought wherever it leads is impugned as the original error—a racist, sexist, Eurocentric deception which must be corrected.

Freedman asks why it is such a big issue today if it wasn't then. He must be kidding. The reason is that the process he so nostalgically portrays has been sacrificed to political pressure imposed upon the faculty, and required of the students. . . . It was because the faculty *weren't* selecting *I, Rigoberta Menchu* over Freud for their reading lists that people like Freedman had to ensure that they would. . . .

The irony is that all evidence indicates that the higher good of greater minority representation in intellectual life is being hindered rather than helped by this sacrifice of intellectual freedom. What cannot be stressed enough is that while the goal is worthy, the means chosen to achieve it are worse than failures; they are counterproductive.

With varying degrees of inadvertence, administrators like Freedman and Sheldon Hackney [of the University of Pennsylvania, now head of the National Endowment for the Humanities] are transforming our universities. The mission of the academy is no longer the pursuit of knowledge but rather to serve as the site for settling historical accounts, . . . an

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arena where symbolic victim-representatives confront symbolic oppressor-representatives, and demand reparations from them.

With the failure of such transformative policies in the wider world, the universities have become the last havens or "model communities" where radical engineering can be applied. And the successes, when they are not forthcoming, are just created by changing the standards and the grading. This is playing tennis with the net down. . . .

DAVID W. MURRAY
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I appreciate the attention paid to the MLA's survey of college literature courses in recent issues of COMMENTARY, first in Norman Podhoretz's article, "On Reading for Pleasure Again" [December 1992], and now in Carol Iannone's "PC With a Human Face." In the interest of accuracy, however, I must make the following corrections.

1. In the exchange of letters following Mr. Podhoretz's article [Letters from Readers, April], he complains that the teachers who responded to the MLA survey are not teaching the literary works of Henry James and Mark Twain. The American literature course considered in the MLA survey covers the period from 1800 to 1865; James and Twain are generally taught in courses that focus on the period after the Civil War. In fact, James was twenty-two years old in 1865 and had not yet written the works for which he is most admired.

2. Carol Iannone asserts the "utter falsity" of the MLA survey report on the basis of an article in *Academic Questions* that reviews the MLA survey and concludes that the "classics *have* been displaced." But even the authors of the *Academic Questions* article do not treat the MLA survey report as though it were utterly false. They use what supports their conclusion and discount what contradicts it. For example, they say the MLA survey showed little change because it focused on upper-division courses that leave "especially little room" for change. The loss of the classics, they claim, has instead taken place in lower-division courses the MLA did not examine. They provide no evidence for this assertion.

How sound, then, is the conclusion that the classics have been displaced? We stand by the findings of the MLA survey report. The American-literature teachers who responded to the survey did not always name the same three traditional authors or works as particularly important to their courses, but the majority gave priority to these authors and works. Perhaps the following statistic makes the point best. Only 13 percent of the American-literature teachers surveyed named noncanonical authors or texts as particularly important to their courses (*ADE Bulletin*, p. 43).

Readers of COMMENTARY who are curious about what the MLA survey report did say can read it for themselves by requesting a copy from the MLA office (10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003; telephone 212-614-6301).

PHYLLIS FRANKLIN
Executive Director
Modern Language Association of America
New York City

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

Phyllis Franklin's "correction" of my response to her letter in our April issue is disingenuous. True, I was slightly off in complaining that Mark Twain and Henry James failed to make the chart in a survey covering the period from 1800 to 1865. But this in no way mitigates the damning facts to which I pointed: that only a little more than half the professors surveyed considered Hawthorne "particularly important" to their courses; that fewer than half voted for Thoreau and Melville; and that Whitman (with 28.1 percent) and Emily Dickinson (with 10.9 percent) did even worse.

CAROL IANNONE writes:

David Bromwich does not really explain the contradiction that I pointed out, namely, that on the one hand he devotes pages to denying any religious basis to the American character while on the other hand he characterizes Allan Bloom as being, because of his atheism, outside the American grain. As for the rest of Mr. Bromwich's letter, it would seem that for him, the merest whisper of the word "religion" is enough to conjure up visions of ayatollahs under his bed.

I accept Ellen Willis's assertion that, contrary to my impression, the Union of Democratic Intellectuals rejects "political correctness." But that brings me to the larger question which her letter addresses, as does that of Donald Lazere. In the Summer 1993 *Academic Questions*, Jerry L. Martin points out that the debate over PC often misses the main issue, which is this:

> [T]here is a very significant body of opinion in academe that holds that, while the term "political correctness" is an epithet to be avoided, the mission of higher education should indeed be political—that the goal should be, not the pursuit of "objective" truth, but nothing less than a fundamental transformation of society.

For example: UDI, according to its own literature, openly aims to use the academy "to democratize our culture." This kind of mission tends to shade into PC as its adherents put their goal before all else, including efforts at objectivity and rationality. Being political themselves, moreover, they often, like Mr. Lazere, characterize such efforts at objectivity as merely the "politics" of their opposition. Thus, it becomes impossible to argue any issue on the merits. If I say to Ellen Willis that I do not think the perceived inequalities between the sexes are due to a systemic imbalance of power but to sexual differences, would I not be branded "sexist"?

Miss Willis and Mr. Lazere object that those who criticize the Left do not deal with the Left's arguments. I find this mind-boggling. Countless articles and books have gone into the most painstaking detail about leftist scholarship and criticism, often in excess of the intrinsic merits of the work they are studying. Nor has this analysis been rebutted with an equal amount of patience and care. Gerald Graff and Henry Lewis Gates's crudely assembled books, which I reviewed in my article, testify to that.

In these books, what Mr. Lazere daintily refers to as "careful reasoning" I call trying to have things both ways. In Gates's case, a nominal repudiation of the nonsensical idea of "essentialism" goes hand in hand with the (unproved) contention that black writing is a special aesthetic area "systematically" excluded from the canon. In "Two Cheers for the Cultural Left," Richard Rorty makes some good criticisms of the academic Left, but

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then proceeds to accommodate himself to the radicalism he criticizes. This is exactly what I mean by PC with a human face.

The problem with Mr. Lazere is that he just does not like what is being said by those he terms "conservatives" (whose ranks, incidentally, include such well-known *non*-conservatives as C. Vann Woodward, John Searle, Eugene Genovese, James David Barber, Elizabeth Fox Genovese, and Mary Lefkowitz). The reason these defenders of the tradition have to keep making the same points again and again is that the Left keeps attacking, and no matter how many times its arguments are demolished, it keeps coming back like the liquid-metal cyborg in *Terminator II.*

To say as I do that literature has a life beyond politics and sociology and mass cultural analysis is not "ideology." Of course it is legitimate to bring in these dimensions—I never argued otherwise—but not to substitute them for literary analysis and genuine engagement with a work of art on its own terms. It is one thing to say that race or gender or class has an effect, in literature or in life; it is quite another to deny that there is anything in art or life that can transcend this effect.

Regarding Phyllis Franklin's letter, I did not "treat the [MLA] survey report as though it were utterly false." I said the claims being made for it were false, in that the data within the report show a different picture from the one the MLA has tried to project. As the authors of the article in *Academic Questions* point out, the survey was, to begin with, already designed to yield reassuring results. For example, "nearly half of the respondents were full professors (three-quarter were full or associate) and only 17 percent were under forty years of age." The fact that only upper-division courses were surveyed is significant because (1) classics can be expected to be particularly well-entrenched in upper-division courses, and (2) changes would more likely be found in survey and introductory courses taught by younger faculty.

The report itself gives support to this latter hypothesis, revealing, for example, that 42.1 percent of faculty who received their highest degrees after 1980 say they have been influenced by Marxist approaches to literature (in con-

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"Land for Peace"

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Many believe that the "land for peace" formula will solve the long-simmering problems of the Middle East. They think that peace would soon come to this troubled region if only Israel surrendered Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"), Gaza and the Golan Heights to the Arabs.

What are the facts?

A totally new concept. The concept of "land for peace" is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one specific purpose only, namely to persuade and pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the "West Bank," the focus of today's attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

"A new idea, perhaps even a good one...but it needs to work both ways to be valid and effective."

Thus, while the concept of "land for peace" is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came.

Should be 2-way street. In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan to the Israeli government. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations with its neighbor, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the world; the port and naval installation of Sharm-el-Sheik, and the oil fields that Israel had developed. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

One would expect that the concept of "land for peace" would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the Arabs is considered "holy Arab soil" and its possession by the "infidels" (Christians or Jews) is inadmissible. No compromise, no concession is ever possible.

Conflict is with Arab nations. The "land for peace" formulation is now applied mostly to Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank"), the Gaza region and the Golan Heights. Israel's foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs, in exchange for "peace." But no peace will come about by Israel's giving up these areas of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use these lands as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the Palestinians. It is first of all between Israel and the Arab nations. With the single exception of Egypt, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has the possibility ever occurred of *their* trading land for peace, for instance yielding the "West Bank", Gaza and the Golan Heights to Israel for the sake of peace. There isn't even a gesture of accommodation, such as a lifting of the Arab economic boycott against Israel, an apology for the odious slander that Zionism is Racism, or a discontinuation of the yearly charade in the United Nations, in which the Arab states attempt to expel Israel from that body. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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trast to the 20.7 percent of pre-1969 doctorates who report being so influenced). Similarly, nearly three-quarters of respondents with post-1980 doctorates teach the "influence of race, class, and gender," as opposed to half of pre-1969 doctorates.

Even given the design of the survey, it is not true that the authors find "little change." For example, 61.7 percent of all respondents said they aim to help students "understand the influence of race, class, and gender on literature and interpretation," while only 51 percent thought it important for students to "understand the enduring ideas and values of Western civilization." At least half of the teachers of American literature who had recently suplemented their course readings added minor works or literary criticism, and 64 percent of those who added literary criticism added only post-1975 criticism. Such figures, combined with the fact that only 39-56 percent cited works by Hawthorne, Thoreau, Melville, and Emerson among three works "particularly important" to a course on American literature from 1800 to 1865, would seem to indicate that quite a lot of displacement is going on.

I thank Lloyd B. Lewis for his comments. He might be interested to know that Gerald Graff does recommend "teaching the conflicts" in the sciences as well. Noting declining enrollments in these disciplines, Graff observes that soon they, too, may be "forced to widen their scope to encompass more of their historical and social context." God help them.

Finally, David W. Murray is right on the money. During his Senate hearings to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, Sheldon Hackney actually conceded the truth of much of Mr. Murray's argument; the sincerity of this "confirmation conversion" remains unclear.

Hebrew in America

To the Editor of Commentary:

Hazak ubarukh [strength and blessings] to Alan Mintz on his call to restore Hebrew literacy to its formerly normal state ["Hebrew in America," July]. The introductions to many of the new English editions of rabbinic classics often say that the translations are necessary to meet the needs of *ba'alei teshuvah*, newly religious people who do not have the benefit of a solid Jewish education. However, the use of these works in the classrooms of more than a few serious yeshivas testifies that they are a response to the growing Hebrew illiteracy in Jewish education.

It is hard to understand why the religious leaders of these American yeshivas would set out to create a situation in which their students will be excluded from discussions with rabbis and students in many Israeli yeshivas or will be forced to attend yeshivas especially created for American students. More puzzling is the fact that many of the girls' schools associated with American yeshivas are quite comfortable teaching Hebrew. . . .

Our own yeshiva high school continues to teach all Judaic studies in Hebrew; classroom discussion, reports, exams, etc. are all conducted in Hebrew, too. Two years of upper-level courses are devoted to preparing our students for the exam in Hebrew language and literature given by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; this exam, largely through our school's efforts over the last decade, has been accepted at many American universities as the equivalent of an advanced-placement exam on the basis of which up to nine college credits are awarded. . . .

Joel B. Wolowelsky
Yeshivah of Flatbush
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

"Hebrew in America" by Alan Mintz is an erudite exposition of a crucial problem of the American Jewish community today. However, in dwelling on the dark side it ignores rays of light—existing and developing programs which provide substance for the present and hope for the future of Hebrew in this country. This failure . . . renders the article inaccurate; thus, inadvertently, the article contributes to the very malaise it bemoans.

Histadruth Ivrith of America has served as the catalyst for the production and dissemination of Hebrew language and culture in North America since its inception in 1916. Representing scholars and laymen, it has pioneered in the areas of Hebrew education, Hebrew camping, ulpans, cultural enrichment, and publishing. Many of the Hebraists mentioned in the article established the Histadruth Ivrith, sustained it, and gave expression to their creative talents in its Hebrew publications.

In contrast to Jewish scholars who lament the rendering of Hebrew culture in translation and yet write and conduct all their "Hebrew programs" in English, Histadruth Ivrith conducts its activities mainly in Hebrew. For example, we publish two magazines in Hebrew: *Hadoar*, in print since 1921, designed for fluent readers, and *Lamishpaha*, founded in 1963, for intermediate-level readers. . . .

The credo of Histadruth Ivrith has been, and still is, that Hebrew is a preserver of our heritage, the vehicle of Jewish values and Jewish creativity, and the consolidating force of our people. Thus, the survival of Judaism and, to an extent, that of the Jewish community in the Diaspora, depends on the cultivation of Jewish culture, of which Hebrew is a critical and integral element.

Aviva Barzel
Executive Vice President
Histadruth Ivrith of America
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

I am amazed that Alan Mintz does not mention Histadruth Ivrith of America in his article. Surely he is aware of its existence. As an active member of its board for many years, I have been involved in many of its successful activities and still-growing projects. In particular I would like to call your attention to a project I have chaired for the past seven years. It is called *Tov Lichtov* ("It is Fun to Write"). This year 81 schools participated in encouraging creative writing in Hebrew, from first grade through high school. . . . *Tov Lichtov* . . . represents a serious and meaningful effort on the part of Histadruth Ivrith and students who are our future Hebrew literati.

Avivah Benamy
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

That the holder of the chair of modern Hebrew literature at Brandeis University should feel compelled to advocate a massive and expensive effort to spread the teaching of Hebrew in America is no surprise. That he should be able to present a persuasive argument for this end would be expected, but he has failed to do so. Alan Mintz acknowledges that Hebrew is a difficult language to acquire; that, as a result of Jewish

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Studies programs and cooperating publishers, a vast outpouring of translated Hebrew texts, both religious and secular, from the Jewish past is now easily available; and that the infrastructure that once existed for the teaching of Hebrew, particularly Hebrew-speaking summer camps, has in fact attenuated. The only argument he can seem to find for an all-out attempt to revive the Hebrew language in America and the expense and effort that would be required to do so is that something is lost in translation from Hebrew to English. Of course that is true, but whether the writers are Rashi or Nahmanides, Bialik or Ahad Ha-am, Ben-Gurion or Appelfeld, assuredly 90 percent of what they are trying to say comes through in translation.

The real issue on the American Jewish cultural scene today is not a quixotic effort to disseminate Hebrew, but what impact Jewish Studies programs, and the rich array of translated texts from the Jewish past they have made accessible, are going to have on the mindset of American Jewry and particularly on the college-age population.

As a recent article in *Judaism* by a professor of Jewish Studies at a leading state university admitted (the first time I have seen this in print), the results are not meeting the high expectations of the benefactors who have so lavishly endowed chairs in Jewish Studies programs. Enrollments in these courses are quite modest and may be declining. There is a danger that the Jewish Studies programs, whose foundings were given impetus by the creation of Afro-American Studies programs, may go down a parallel disappointing road: well-endowed programs with interesting courses but only modest interest from the clientele they were principally intended to serve.

I think Mr. Mintz states the issue wrongly. It is not whether Hebrew is going to be so lavishly studied that Rashi and Nahmanides can be read widely in the original. It is whether there will be significant numbers of students studying Rashi and Nahmanides in the excellent translations increasingly available. Will the English-language Jewish Studies programs make a difference in the common culture of American Jewry?

NORMAN F. CANTOR
New York University
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alan Mintz is clearly on target in depicting Hebrew's moribund status in the American Jewish community as a whole. But in stating that . . . "the knowledge of Hebrew is in eclipse as well" among Orthodox Jews, his acuity is less exemplary. Undoubtedly Orthodoxy has been witness to an "enormous spate of . . . translations of traditional texts into English." In part, however, this reflects a large *ba'al-teshuvah* readership with meager Hebrew background and in need of immediate access to classical Jewish sources rendered in the vernacular. . . .

But Hebrew *never* was the vernacular of Orthodox Jews, either in Eastern Europe or in America. In the Eastern Europe of yesteryear, had there been sufficient financial resources to generate publications similar to the Art Scroll series, the material would have been rendered in Yiddish, certainly not Hebrew.

What Mr. Mintz fails to focus on beyond passing reference, however, is the presence of one other large (and still growing) Orthodox group: the thousands of students who attend schools of higher Jewish education in America and in Israel. . . . There is a notion that yeshiva students are not "fluent" in Hebrew; this is most emphatically not the case. Though students in the American yeshiva world are generally not comfortable expressing themselves in *modern* Hebrew, they are extremely knowledgeable in the *classical* Hebrew of biblical and rabbinical texts. And since these works are the very foundation of the modern tongue, they are easily able to acclimate themselves to contemporary usages. . . .

Mr. Mintz, may I suggest, should have more accurately titled his article "Hebraism in America," for it is not the Hebrew language that is in peril on these shores . . . , but rather the continued existence of "Hebraism," that century-old movement which sought to resurrect Hebrew and to create a modern culture around it.

That the movement has been successful beyond its founders' wildest dreams is self-evident, and the Hebraists can rightfully be proud of it. It was they who, despite significant opposition, transformed the Jewish community in Palestine into a Hebrew-speaking entity. But a major part of their accomplishments must also be ceded to a historical event in which they played no role, the establishment of the state of Israel. . . . Were it not for Israel, Hebraism would have remained for Diaspora Jewry what it always had been for them: a movement limited to an elite literary few, with no great mass appeal.

Hebraism was always anathema to the non-Zionist Orthodox, who never accepted its secular philosophy. In more recent years, the Religious Zionists (Mizrachi), who once did fly a modified banner of Hebraism, have for the most part abandoned ship as well. . . .

Which leaves the secularists as the only remaining bearers of the torch of Hebraism. The problem is that even secular Hebraism always had some of the trappings of a religious movement and owed no small measure of its success to the zeal with which its adherents carried on their missionary work. But most movements of this sort generally do not survive too long beyond the lives of their founders. It is exhilarating to see the flames of Hebraism still burning brightly in Mr. Mintz, but I doubt that there exist too many others today who remain equally turned on.

Which raises the more important question of whether outside of Israel a secular Jewish culture on the level envisioned by Ahad Ha-am is really sustainable. . . . My forecast for Hebraism in America is, to paraphrase Mr. Mintz, that "it may seem quixotic and even a touch delusional to think that a great [secular] Hebrew culture could survive on these shores."

NORMAN A. BLOOM
North Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Alan Mintz's article reflects a sensitive understanding of the Jewish experience in America, but an incomplete and inaccurate view of the history of Hebrew in America. His piece begins, "The great migrations that began at the end of the last century brought many languages to these shores." But Hebrew began playing a meaningful role in American culture a century and a half earlier; its importance in the early 20th century was marginal compared to the 18th century.

Hebrew was taught (and was often a required course) in all of

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America's prerevolutionary colleges. The first Hebrew book printed in America was written in 1735 by Judah Monis for classes taught at Harvard. Hebrew is prominently displayed in the seals of Dartmouth and Yale.

James Madison, the fourth U.S. President and the author of the Bill of Rights, spoke and wrote fluent Hebrew. He delivered an oration in Hebrew at the commencement exercises of the Class of 1771 at Princeton.

The erudite Protestant clerics who headed America's colonial colleges (Eleazer Wheelock, Jonathan Edwards, Ezra Stiles, among others) were Hebraists. I doubt that same could be said for Messrs. Freedman, Shapiro, and Levin, today's presidents of Dartmouth, Princeton, and Yale.

The first Hebrew grammar written especially for Dartmouth undergraduates (1802) was created "to facilitate the study of the Scriptures in the original." Hebrew was held in high regard by colonial America's intellectual leaders out of respect for the Jews' greatest contribution to Western civilization.

HERMAN J. OBERMAYER
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The neglect of Hebrew in America is a grave problem," Alan Mintz writes in his provocative article, ". . . for, in my judgment, the quality of American Jewish life as it evolves into the future depends on Hebrew cultural literacy." Delete "Jewish" from the sentence and the Pilgrim fathers might have cried out "Amen."

From its founding in 1636 Harvard required its students to learn Hebrew. The same requirement applied to Yale, founded some 65 years later; the official seal of the university is still today inscribed in Hebrew with the words *Urim Vetumim*. The first book published in the Colonies was the *Bay Psalm Book*, a translation of the psalms from the Hebrew by Richard Mather, the father of Increase and Cotton Mather. This firebrand Puritan minister who fled England in 1635 referred to his followers as his "*Hasidim Rishonim*" [first devotees]. . . . In short, Hebrew roots run deep (albeit today almost invisible) in Protestant America. . . .

HY KALUS
Riverdale, New York

ALAN MINTZ writes:

It was the aim of my article to present the general cultural crisis of American Jewry in reference to Hebrew rather than to assess the institutional programs that are currently being offered. Several of the letters perform the service of describing such programs. Brooklyn's Yeshivah of Flatbush has been known for decades as having one of the strongest Hebrew curriculums in the nation, and preparing students for the Jerusalem exam as advanced college-placement credit is an idea that deserves adoption by other Jewish high schools. The Histadruth Ivrith is also to be commended for the many admirable programs it offers the community, as well as its important Hebrew-language publications. (Because the Histadruth Ivrith has devoted its resources to servicing the needs of those who are already in the Hebrew camp, the organization has understandably not had much success in making the case for Hebrew to the rest of the community.) Hadassah should also be singled out as the national Jewish organization that has given serious attention to Hebrew. An inventory and evaluation of these and other Hebrew programs would certainly be desirable, but this was not what I set out to do.

If Norman F. Cantor really believes that "assuredly 90 percent of what they [Hebrew texts and authors] are trying to say comes through in translation," then we have little common ground for discussion. I find this a sad confirmation of the particularly American self-assurance I described which views the embeddedness of foreign cultures in foreign languages as a nuisance. I share Mr. Cantor's concern about the future of Jewish Studies programs, but I expect that we would differ about the criteria for success. As an area of instruction and research, Jewish Studies was never intended to be carried out in translation alone (as opposed to "the quixotic effort to disseminate Hebrew"). The degree of Hebrew literacy to be expected from the products of such programs is very much a live issue.

Norman A. Bloom's intelligent defense of non-Zionist Orthodoxy is wrong on two points of fact. First, while Hebrew was not the daily spoken language of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, it certainly was the written vernacular of Orthodox rabbinic and scholarly circles for nearly all purposes (personal correspondence, controversy, responsa, memoirs, and more). Second, as Joel B. Wolowelsky sagely observes in his letter, the vast number of translations in use in the Orthodox world can hardly be accounted for by the needs of *ba'alei teshuvah*, the newly Orthodox, alone.

No one would deny the vibrancy of the yeshiva world described by Mr. Bloom or the high literacy of its elite students when it comes to classical Hebrew. But when Mr. Bloom refers to religious Zionism as if it were merely a momentary aberration in the history of Orthodoxy, he shows his true colors. In this view of Judaism, in which modernity as a problem does not exist, the revival of the Hebrew language and the creation of the Jewish state confer no religious meaning and change nothing. In such an outlook, why should modern Hebrew ever be anything more than a secular vernacular?

Finally, Herman J. Obermayer and Hy Kalus invoke the prestige Hebrew enjoyed in colonial America. This is indeed a stirring lineage, and one not overlooked by university development offices when they tried to raise funds (from Jewish donors, of course) to establish Jewish Studies programs on some of the great campuses where the glories of Hebrew had long been moribund. The interest of Protestant divines in Hebrew also had its unsavory side. They were concerned with Hebrew only as a way of understanding the Hebrew Bible, and their interest in the language—as well as in the Jews altogether—ceased after the "Old Testament" was superseded by the "New." To be sure, in the middle of the 18th century Judah Monis taught Hebrew at Harvard and published a Hebrew grammar. But both his lectureship and his book were possible only because of his conversion to Christianity, which took place on the eve of his appointment to the Harvard faculty. Recognition of Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people and its civilization through the ages would have to wait another two centuries.

HIV and AIDS

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Fumento's review of Robert S. Root-Bernstein's book, *Rethinking AIDS: The Tragic Cost*

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of Premature Consensus [Books in Review, July], concludes reassuringly that "the AIDS heretics *have* been given 'room to express their concerns' and have been found wanting." ("AIDS heretics" is the phrase Mr. Fumento uses for those who question whether the human immunodeficiency virus [HIV] causes AIDS.) But Mr. Fumento's attempt to reassure his readers seriously distorts the facts.

One fact is the gross disproportion between the attention accorded the view that HIV causes AIDS and the "heretical" questioning of it. The "AIDS heretics" have succeeded in having only about eight articles published in the scientific literature during the same period in which more than 77,000 articles premised on HIV's causal role have appeared. A much more important fact is that since 1984, virtually every dollar of funding from the federal government for AIDS research has been devoted to work premised on the causal role of HIV and awarded only to grant recipients who do not question that causal role. Something like $4 billion of taxpayer monies is now given annually to the HIV "orthodoxy," and not a nickel to the "heretics."

Such a disproportionate research focus on a single avenue of investigation could conceivably be justified if it had resulted in some meaningful advance. But, to the contrary, this massive, narrowly targeted expenditure of public monies has not resulted in saving or prolonging a single life. There is no medical gain to which anybody can point resulting from the "orthodox" view that AIDS is a viral disease. Far from it: a recent authoritative study of the drug AZT, which the orthodoxy had claimed would moderate the effects of the supposed viral pathogen, has determined that AZT neither reduces morbidity nor increases longevity. Moreover, it is clear and undisputed that AZT is toxic. Perhaps this is why Arthur Ashe, who recently died at age forty-nine after years of treatment with AZT, expressed misgivings in his posthumously published autobiography about having blindly followed the prescription of AZT.

Nor can the remarkable targeting of all federal research funds on HIV be justified in terms of the most basic epidemiological facts about AIDS—that it predominantly affects males and populations which abuse recreational drugs. No virus known to science singles out one sex or a host which engages in a particular form of self-abuse.

Mr. Fumento's reassuring conclusion is thus deeply inadequate. The issue is not whether so-called AIDS heretics have been granted "room to express their concerns"; the question is why the community at large is seemingly not concerned when precious research dollars are targeted on a single theory which has produced no progress toward medical success, instead of being more broadly distributed to maximize the chance that a terrible and costly epidemic can be controlled. The HIV orthodoxy, which Mr. Fumento represents, seems more interested in self-perpetuation than in balanced scientific inquiry.

Mr. Fumento's review does have the virtue of exposing readers in a short space to the style of arrogant and dismissive argument which the orthodox have made their own and which, indeed, becomes more shrill and less scientific as the years roll by, while they fail to save or even prolong victims' lives. For example, Mr. Fumento concludes that a recent epidemiological study in *Nature* supposedly "devastates" my view that heavy use of such drugs as "poppers," cocaine, and amphetamines can cause AIDS-defining diseases, and proves the pathogenic role of HIV. The study documented that all those who had developed AIDS were "heavy drug users" and were HIV-positive. But epidemiology cannot decide between a causal and a noncausal correlate of a disease. This can only be done by functional tests of drug and HIV toxicity. And nine years of HIV research have failed to show any HIV toxicity to human cells whatsoever. In fact, HIV is mass-produced for the "AIDS test" in permanently growing T-cells. In contrast to HIV, the toxicities of illicit recreational drugs, including nitrites, cocaine, and amphetamines, have been documented in the literature since 1909.

Similarly, Mr. Fumento characterizes as "nonsense"—again, that characteristically emotive use of language—my view that AZT, not

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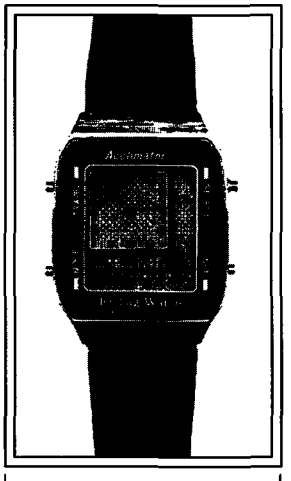

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HIV, killed Kimberly Bergalis, even though it is beyond dispute that AZT kills T-cells at 250-*millionth* of a gram per liter while HIV has never been shown to be toxic to *any* human cell.

The fundamental "concerns" which underlie Root-Bernstein's book and my own work ought to be shared by all who call themselves scientists, and indeed by all citizens: that not only the prevention and treatment of AIDS but the scientific enterprise itself is being jeopardized by the people whose attitudes and tactics Mr. Fumento's review embodies.

PETER DUESBERG
Department of Molecular and Cell Biology
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was disappointed in Michael Fumento's review of Robert S. Root-Bernstein's *Rethinking AIDS*. Mr. Fumento had earlier performed an important service by putting the AIDS problem in perspective in his own book, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*. But his condescending critique of Root-Bernstein's scholarly book is marred by questionable assumptions. Mr. Fumento insists that HIV infection is a rigorous prerequisite for clinical AIDS. He dismisses the failure of HIV to cause any symptoms resembling AIDS in chimpanzees by citing the failure of certain viral diseases in rabbits and cats to cause diseases in humans. But the genetic material and protein constituents of chimpanzees and humans are 99-percent identical, which lends much more significance to the failure of HIV to cause AIDS in chimpanzees than the failure of other viruses to cross barriers among remotely related organisms. Mr. Fumento also ignores the fact that the number of HIV-infected persons in this country since 1987 has remained at a constant level of 1 to 1.5 million but the annual rate of clinical AIDS has been only about 30,000. This amounts to an annual AIDS incidence of 2.3 percent among HIV-infected individuals, giving them a life expectancy of 33-50 years. Since infection occurs on the average only from 20 years and up, the life expectancy of infected individuals in the general population begins to approach normal.

Another example of Mr. Fumento's faulty logic in rejecting alternative causes of AIDS is seen when he cites the failure of his friend to develop the disease despite multiple immune-suppressive treatments following a severe accident. A single failure is hardly convincing in view of the statistics just noted. It becomes less significant when contrasted with the years of repeated self-inflicted immunosuppressions in high-risk groups occasioned by habitual intravenous and other drug use and the multiple infections encountered by those engaged in promiscuous homosexual behavior involving anal intercourse, fisting, rimming, etc. The infections include high incidences of cytomegalo virus, herpes virus, hepatitis virus, Epstein-Barr virus, syphilis, gonorrhea, and a host of fungal and protozoan parasites.

My own skepticism about singling out HIV as the sole essential factor in AIDS arose from my research experience with the leukosis viruses of chickens, which were discovered 80 years ago and were the first identified agents of the retroviral class to which HIV belongs. I developed a method for assaying these viruses over 30 years ago, and found that 95 percent of the birds in the large flock I was studying were infected. Yet only 50 percent of them developed the classic avian type of leukemia attributed to the virus. It was found by others that the disease occurred in virus-free flocks, although somewhat later on the average than in the infected ones, and probably had more to do with the conditions of modern poultry-raising than with infection.

As for the latest claim of an exclusive causal role of HIV in AIDS in a recent paper cited by Mr. Fumento, it is noteworthy that no tests were made for the many other micro-organisms known to occur in the homosexual population under scrutiny (see above), so the conclusion is hardly warranted. Even the rejection of a causal role for drug use, which is the central theme of the paper, is clouded by serious internal inconsistencies in its drug-use classification of subjects, so the entire enterprise is open to question.

Root-Bernstein has done an exhaustive job of compiling the facts about AIDS. He has maintained an open-minded attitude throughout, and has not ruled out the possibility—some would say probability, more would say certainty—that HIV is the main culprit in AIDS. Others would say that HIV infection is itself only the result of immune deficiency and as such just an indicator of certain kinds of risk behavior. The fact is that AIDS is an extremely complex syndrome of diseases that is most likely the result of a complex set of causes. The one thing we know definitely is that it is strongly associated with certain behaviors, and the only sure way to reduce its incidence is to modify those behaviors. Root-Bernstein's book is an important contribution to acknowledging this fact of life. Mr. Fumento's facile dismissal of the book does a disservice to present and future AIDS sufferers by discouraging a broadscale study of the problem.

HARRY RUBIN
Department of Molecular and Cell Biology
Virologist to the Virus Laboratory
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Fumento uses the following argument to explain the failure of chimpanzees infected with HIV to get AIDS: the myxomatosis virus, which kills rabbits, does not harm humans. And the feline leukemia virus, which kills cats, also does not affect humans. We are led to suppose that it was foolish of experimenters even to think about injecting chimps with HIV. "How can Root-Bernstein not know this?" Mr. Fumento condescendingly asks.

The myxomatosis and HIV cases are not even remotely comparable, however. The key point about the human immunodeficiency virus, which Mr. Fumento fails to tell his readers, is that it did "take," or replicate, within the chimpanzees. The myxomatosis virus, on the other hand, is highly host-specific, and replicates only within rabbits and (some) hares.

Researchers from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) fully expected that the chimps would contract AIDS. Inject them with polio virus and they do get polio. On being informed that the virus had replicated within chimps without causing AIDS, the director of the Scripps Oceanographic Institute said it was a blow to the viral theory.

The infection of these animals was an expensive proposition for

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the NIH: 150 chimpanzees were infected at a cost of $50,000 each. Chimpanzees are endangered and a thick rule book must be used by those who handle them. NIH virologist Robert Gallo even took the precaution of cozying up to Jane Goodall, inviting her to address his annual NIH-sponsored AIDS meeting. Meanwhile the chimpanzees had to be kept "clean"—free of other experimental pathogens. In retrospect, Jane Goodall must be delighted. For ten years, the HIV-positive chimps have been frolicking about in their cages, contentedly eating bananas, all the while remaining in perfectly good health.

How come Mr. Fumento does not know all this? He has been writing about AIDS for years now and this is not the first time he has mentioned the chimpanzees as though they demonstrated not the weakness of the HIV hypothesis but the ignorance of those who disagree with him.

There is another and perhaps more important group that has been exposed to HIV. I refer to the more than one million doctors, nurses, and lab technicians who have worked with AIDS patients, or with the virus directly, in the course of a twelve-year epidemic. How many of them have come down with AIDS as a result of accidental needle-stick?

When I last checked with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the government was claiming seven such cases. Peter Duesberg says that these patients' names and medical records have never been released, however. There are one or two cases in the courts. The numbers are in any event statistically insignificant. Every year there are 15,000 cases of hepatitis infection from needle-stick.

Mr. Fumento mentions the *Nature* study, published in March of this year, supposedly falsifying Duesberg's claim that drug use impairs the immune system and is the real cause of the various diseases we call AIDS. I was surprised to read in the *New York Times* last March that this study had been submitted to *Nature* in response to an article I had written about Duesberg for the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s op-ed page last September. This must be the first study ever published in *Nature* in response to an op-ed piece, showing better than anything the intensely

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political character of "scientific" research in this field.

Researchers at Berkeley (not including Duesberg) have subsequently examined the raw data on which this study was based and have discovered that there were numerous cases of AIDS-indicator diseases within the HIV-negative cohort. These were not reported as AIDS cases in the *Nature* study, however, making it look as though AIDS-indicator diseases are more highly correlated with HIV than is really the case.

Mr. Fumento reports that there have been a "few dozen" cases of AIDS without HIV. The truth is that by 1987, in at least half of the so-called AIDS cases nationwide, no HIV test had been conducted at all. Patients were "presumed" to be positive. The CDC now says there have been over 43,000 such presumptive diagnoses. Last year there was quite a lot of publicity about cases in which no trace of HIV could be found, despite careful testing. These cases looked very much like AIDS (emaciated homosexual men with pneumocystis and ruined immune systems). At that point the CDC boldly claimed that this was an entirely new disease, which it called idiopathic CD4 T-cell lymphocytopenia (ICL).

"If they had admitted that the ICL cases were really AIDS cases, then that would be the absolute proof that HIV is not a necessary cause of AIDS," Robert S. Root-Bernstein told me in an interview in April. "Everyone would understand that, and it would undermine everything that they have done in the last ten years. You'll notice that within two weeks they had a new definition of a new disease. I think in the history of medicine that has to be the fastest."

This is politics, not science. Mr. Fumento well knows that the official version of AIDS is seriously flawed. His own book, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*, exposing some of the more glaring epidemiological errors, was actually suppressed by an informal network of AIDS activists across the country. Even as I write, the old propaganda about everyone being "at risk" keeps on appearing in the news media. These stories, for the most part based on bogus World Health Organization statistics about AIDS in Africa, continue to be uncritically retailed by the *New York Times* and other newspapers. Yet in many respects Mr. Fumento remains a staunch defender of the official explanation of AIDS.

TOM BETHELL

Hoover Institution
Stanford, Califoirnia

MICHAEL FUMENTO writes:

Tom Bethell puts words in my mouth. I did not say "it was foolish of experimenters even to think about injecting chimps with HIV." My point was this: many viruses cause disease in some animals but not in others, and therefore one cannot say that, since HIV does not cause full-blown AIDS in chimps, it must not cause AIDS in humans. Yet that is exactly what Peter Duesberg and Robert S. Root-Bernstein have been claiming. Incidentally, a virus we have been hearing much about lately, the one which killed several Navajo Indians and others, is another example of a species-specific pathogen. It kills humans about half the time, yet leaves its carrier, the field mouse, healthy.

It is certainly true, as Mr. Bethell states, that few health-care workers have gotten AIDS from needle-sticks. As I explained in my book, *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS*, this is commensurate with a virus that requires a very large dose to cause infection. Needle-sharing among addicts, in which a great deal of blood is actually transferred, can provide that dose. So can blood transfusions and anal intercourse. By contrast, coughing or deep kissing, while possibly resulting in a transfer of a tiny amount of virus, does not allow enough viral load to pass to cause infection. Likewise for the vast majority of needle-stick injuries.

Mr. Bethell does not tell us the names of the Berkeley researchers who disputed the findings of the *Nature* article, but Harry Rubin comes to mind. He also does not tell us, nor does Mr. Rubin, nor does Mr. Duesberg, that Duesberg charged one of his fellow Berkeley professors who worked on the *Nature* paper, Dr. Warren Winkelstein, with scientific fraud, or that Berkeley found Duesberg's charge to be without sufficient merit even to proceed with an investigation. As Mr. Duesberg would no doubt readily admit, most of the Berkeley researchers who work in the AIDS field are quite horrified at his pronouncements.

Mr. Bethell writes that "by 1987, in at least half of the so-called AIDS cases nationwide, no HIV test had been conducted at all." That is because the HIV test only became available in 1985. Was the CDC supposed to exhume the corpses of those who had died previously? Almost all the "missing" 43,000 cases fall into that category.

I addressed the so-called non-HIV AIDS cases in my review. As Duesberg, *et al.* are fond of pointing out, AIDS is actually a syndrome of diseases, all of which can occur in non-HIV-infected persons. Thus, just as a person can have all the symptoms of tuberculosis without actually having tuberculosis, it is certainly possible for persons to display symptoms similar to those of AIDS patients and yet not be infected with HIV. To have several of those symptoms at once, however, is quite rare—though not so rare as to keep Duesberg's followers from citing each and every case as proof of their conspiracy theory.

Mr. Rubin's formula allegedly showing my lack of logic would actually ruin his case were he using correct data. Over three years ago, the CDC dropped its estimate of current infections to a flat one million, although I think that figure is still somewhat high. The CDC also states that for last year, 47,000 AIDS cases were diagnosed in this country. With a median lag time of ten years from infection to full-blown AIDS (median meaning the point at which half of all infections would become AIDS), we would expect that in ten years one million infections would lead to 500,000 AIDS cases, or an average of 50,000 a year. That jibes nicely with the 47,000 figure for last year and would jibe even better if the CDC lowered its estimate a little.

My point in citing my friend's accident was not that one case disproves a general theory, but that if one were to use the extremely expansive Duesberg/Root-Bernstein definition of immunosuppression, practically everyone would turn out to be affected. It is possible to have any number of suppressive factors as defined by these gentlemen without being either an addict or a homosexual—yet it is homosexuals and addicts who are getting AIDS, not victims of car accidents. The Duesberg/Root-Bernstein theory of the amount of immunosuppression necessary to cause AIDS is essentially tautological: if you have gotten AIDS, your system was sufficiently depressed;

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if you have not, it was not. How handy!

Most of the $4 billion the federal government spends on AIDS each year goes into areas other than research. Of the remainder, much goes into trying to control the various opportunistic infections that accompany AIDS. A comparatively small amount goes to the study of HIV, and that has by no means been wasted, even though we have no cure. For example, the development of the HIV-antibody test has saved thousands of blood recipients each year from infection and death. Incidentally, we also have no cure for any other type of viral infection—despite the viral research of people like Harry Rubin and Peter Duesberg.

Yes, the benefits of AZT have been overstated by a medical establishment desperate to show results, but the study Mr. Duesberg cites only disputed the hypothesis that giving AZT at a very early stage of HIV infection was helpful. To quote the *New England Journal of Medicine*: "This study did not dispute the efficacy of zidovudine [AZT], but it questioned the advantage of early as compared with late treatment." A more recent study, published in the *New England Journal* on July 29 of this year, again confirmed the efficacy of AZT in delaying the onset of serious illness in patients with HIV infection.

Moreover, while AZT certainly can be toxic in the same way many drugs are (especially those used in chemotherapy), neither of the two studies backs up Duesberg's claim that AZT is actually killing people. We are thus left with no explanation as to why Kimberly Bergalis died other than that she suffered HIV infection which became AIDS.

It is amazing that Mr. Duesberg seems never to have heard of hepatitis B, a virus that, like HIV, is spread through blood and semen and, like HIV, disproportionately afflicts homosexual males and intravenous drug abusers.

Despite Mr. Duesberg's claims to the contrary, HIV has been observed in the laboratory directly killing human cells, specifically a white blood cell called a leukocyte. It is also well established that over a period of years, persons with HIV progressively lose CD4+ cells and that, roughly speaking, the fewer CD4+ cells one has, the more susceptible one is to life-threatening infections. Indeed, the new definition of AIDS incorporates this. HIV is not "mass-produced . . . in permanently growing T-cells," as Mr. Duesberg claims, but rather in T-cell *lines*. These lines remain permanent in the same way the human race does, not through immortality but through reproduction.

Nobody has been more critical than I of the AIDS establishment, and nobody has more heavily documented the mis- and disinformation emanating from that body. But that does not mean that if the members of the AIDS establishment say it's sunny and bright out it must necessarily be dark and rainy. On the causal connection between HIV and AIDS there is overwhelming evidence, acknowledged by all but a handful of cultists.

Wisse/Alter

To the Editor of Commentary:

Like Edward Alexander ["The Nerve of Ruth Wisse," May], I too was surprised by Robert Alter's attack on Ruth R. Wisse in the *New Republic*, since I would have expected him to be in accord with her views. But having corresponded for many years with two friends—one to the Left of me and one to the Right—I have some understanding of the problem.

When you are trying to present an argument, one phrase perceived as hostile is enough to put the recipient in a defensive mode. Mr. Alter apparently identifies himself as a "liberal," and once he saw the liberals were to be attacked, any serious consideration of Mrs. Wisse's ideas was over.

Had Mrs. Wisse attacked "leftists" instead of "liberals," she would have done a better job of coalition-building, but written a less honest book. I am not sure an attack restricted to leftists would have been worth writing. It is liberals who are the problem here. Even though they so identify themselves, neither Robert Alter nor the *New Republic* is liberal on foreign policy.

Let me say a word on behalf of the liberals, though. Without any liberals, you have Yugoslavia.

William A. Baker
Bloomfield, New Jersey

To the Editor of Commentary:

In Edward Alexander's discussion of the controversy between Robert Alter and Ruth R. Wisse, I did not detect the quality of *rahmanut* (mercy), or as it is called in Yiddish, *rahmoness*. It should be possible, in my opinion, for a committed Jew and Zionist, one whose essential being is defined largely by those terms, to see the Palestinians as a suffering people, a people who need help, even with the knowledge that it is the Palestinian people themselves, and especially their leaders (including religious leaders), who have brought them to their present situation, and not the Jews (Zionists) whom they blame and regard as their enemy. . . .

David L. Klepper
New York City

Edward Alexander writes:

Although I agree with much of what William A. Baker says, I am not sure that the absence of liberals explains the catastrophe in the former Yugoslavia. In fact, one might plausibly argue that the beginning of that country's slide toward disaster was the international community's application of the liberal principle of national self-determination, giving us the state of Croatia and its very popular anti-Semitic (and anti-Serbian) president, Franjo Tudjman.

Since the Palestinians have for many years been the world's chief recipients of pity, I am not sure how adding my mite would help them. Or does David L. Klepper think that pity is supposed to be good for the person who feels it rather than its intended recipient? This is, of course, the attitude of the proverbial do-gooders, whose ranks I do not wish to join because they tend to confuse doing good with feeling good about what they are doing. In fact, Mr. Klepper might wish to consider the possibility that there is an inverse relationship between feeling pity for the Palestinian Arabs and giving them the kind of help they need. As William Blake once wrote, "Pity would be no more,/ If we could not make somebody poor."

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If Bosnians Were Dolphins . . .

Edward N. Luttwak

If the Bosnian Muslims had been bottle-nosed dolphins, would the world have allowed Croats and Serbs to slaughter them by the tens of thousands? If Sarajevo had been an Amazonian rainforest or merely an American wood containing spotted owls, would the Serbs have been allowed to blast it and burn it with their artillery fire?

The answers are too obvious, the questions merely rhetorical. And therein lies a very great irony. At long last a genuine spirit of transnational benevolence has arisen, fulfilling the highest hopes of the rare pioneering globalists of the 19th century and before. No longer does this disinterested benevolence abruptly stop at the boundaries of state, nation, or culture. Instead it now encompasses all of life both animal and vegetal across the entire globe, with only one exception: *Homo sapiens.*

When tigers are allowed to kill villagers, but villagers are not allowed to kill tigers, the World Wildlife Fund and much of the world with it applauds India's "Project Tiger." When the Bolivian government protects Amazonian lowlands by stopping the influx of starving colonists from the overpopulated Andean high plateau, even cold-hearted bankers are so filled with transnational gratitude that they forgive billions of dollars of Bolivia's debt. But the world was harsh with Brazil when it allowed its own hungry colonists from the arid Northeast to set up subsistence farms in the Amazon.

The young people brimming with eco-awareness, the academics and popular singers who guide them, their parents who most generously fund the eco-lobbies and eco-funds, have so far overcome any narrow-minded provincialism that they succeed in caring very deeply for an Amazon basin they are unlikely ever to visit. Ideally, they would like to see all the colonists expelled, all dams slighted, all mines shut in, all ranches abandoned. In their place, they advocate "sustainable-use" eco-plans for the Amazon, whereby only the native tribes and a few thousand acculturated nut gatherers and rubber tappers would be allowed to earn a living within that considerable portion of the earth. But neither the eco-aware enthusiasts nor the eco-professionals have any alternative plans for the destitute peasants now converging on the Amazon, the sort of people who must regularly choose between feeding all their children or buying medicine for just one.

There is, of course, the eagerly-believed futility argument: thin, acid rainforest soils cannot feed the hungry anyway. Yet deeply conservative peasants would not be abandoning their ancestral villages to attempt the perilous journey if those who went before them were already streaming back in failure. Bolivian, Ecuadoran, Peruvian, and Brazilian peasants who burn the forest to clear their own patch of land know very well what they are doing: they can see with their own eyes how well-fed are the settlers who return from the Amazon to visit the old village now and then. Keeping the Amazon intact and keeping the hungry hungry are therefore one and the same. Yet for the cognizant outside world there is no dilemma: the trees of the Amazon win hands down.

It would be superfluous to consider further examples (Rwanda peasants vs. gorillas; Malagache peasants vs. lemurs; Javanese peasants vs. rhinos). For the prevailing view of today's enlightened—a.k.a. the "environmentally sensitive"—is obvious enough: humanity is the planet's skin disease, now disastrously spreading into what remains of the wilderness, threatening the survival of all wild animals and many rare plants too.

Only the logical conclusion is resisted. The eco-enlightened still remain unwilling to applaud nature's own remedy for the planetary skin disease: a vigorous rate of infant mortality. Because the new nature worship must still coexist with residues of monotheism, including the notion that each human life matters in itself, mutually contradictory purposes are inevitable. Thus, many of the eco-enlightened send money both to save unspoiled nature in the third world and also to assist third-world children, though it is precisely the latter who will destroy the former.

Still, the nearly universal acquiescence in China's "one-child policy" shows that infanticide is definitely becoming more acceptable. For it is no secret that the virtually compulsory abortions

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are routinely performed even at very, very late stages of pregnancy, when it is unambiguously babies that are being killed, and not fetuses by anyone's definition.

IN THE present state of ethical confusion, even the otherwise discriminating are apt to follow whatever plausible moral lead is given to them, whether by environmental activists, the likes of Mother Teresa, or even Presidents of the United States of America. True, the last American President viewed the pursuit of any moral purpose in U.S. foreign policy with extreme distaste, as a deviation from what he fondly imagined to be a "tough-minded" *Realpolitik*. As for the current President, he seems to reserve his solicitude for the victim-categories officially recognized by the Democratic party, which do not include Bosnian Muslims.

Nevertheless, the ethical confusion of our times does greatly expand the potential scope of the moral leadership that the President of the United States *could* exercise, for example by persuading the American public that Bosnian Muslims should be actively protected, just as if they were spotted owls or bottle-nosed dolphins.

We have already seen what the state of affairs is in the absence of such presidential leadership, i.e., that there is not enough political support in the United States and beyond for global action to stop even the sort of aggression against human beings that features armed killers on the one side and unarmed victims on the other. Of that Bosnia is more than sufficient proof, in a way that previous horrors were not.

When—to cite the worst of recent cases—the Khmer Rouge murdered a million or more of their fellow Cambodians, the world's inaction until the belated Vietnamese invasion had not just one but three separate excuses.

First, ignorance could be pleaded, because no journalists were allowed into Cambodia to report the killings, and no television cameras to show them. Second, a Cambodian regime was murdering Cambodians within its own borders, so that any forceful intervention to stop the killings would have amounted to aggression according to the international rule book. Finally, the United States—the only possible intervenor aside from Hanoi—had just withdrawn in ignominy and strategic defeat from the shipwreck of South Vietnam, making a new intervention in Indochina almost unimaginable.

None of the three reasons applies to the events in Bosnia. Every form of attack on unarmed civilians, from sniping to artillery barrages and starve-them-out road blockades, has been shown over and over again on television, and also the aftermath of mass murders and mass rapes, as well as of cruel prison-camp starvation. In place of a barrier of ignorance, there has been the "real-time" transmission of every species of horror; only Treblinka-type death factories have been absent, no doubt because in Bosnia the killers have a pre-industrial mentality.

Second, Bosnian Muslims are not killing Bosnian Muslims, as Cambodians had killed Cambodians. They have been attacked, and are being attacked, by Serb and Croat militias that could hardly have operated for long without ample support from the states of Serbia-Montenegro and Croatia, as well as by Serb-Montenegrin and Croat state forces themselves. Both states have therefore been international aggressors by any definition.

Third, none of the plausible outside intervenors could plead exhaustion, as the United States was exhausted on the eve of the Cambodian horrors. Far from it, Western Europe was and is replete with idle troops, dressing up to play war each day while the real war that they might have stopped goes relentlessly on.

TWO new things can therefore be learned from the Bosnian experience in particular. To begin with the smaller lesson, the claim that the "global media revolution" has changed the nature of world affairs by exposing public evildoing as never before has now been exposed as self-congratulatory rubbish. Media coverage only inhibits reasonably law-abiding and passably humane governments that are otherwise inhibited anyway; indeed, in some cases they may be overinhibited from doing what should be done to maintain law and order.

The second lesson of Bosnia is more important, but much harder to accept in its hideous amplitude. We now know, as we could not know before, that the Holocaust itself, surviving Holocaust installations, Holocaust relics, Holocaust documents, the historiography of the Holocaust, Holocaust memoirs, Holocaust fiction, Holocaust-inspired works of art, Holocaust documentaries, Holocaust feature films, Holocaust television serials, and certainly the proliferating Holocaust museums, Holocaust exhibits, and Holocaust multimedia shows have taught and will teach nothing of relevant significance—except to explode the myth that the world was indifferent to the Nazi persecution and mass-murder of Jews *only* because the way had been prepared by widespread and deeply-rooted anti-Semitic feelings. I for one never saw any signs of a widespread and deeply-rooted anti-Bosnianism before the killings started and continued, and continued, and continue unimpeded at every stage.

The truth is much simpler and requires no prior history of anti-isms: the only way to stop determined killers is to kill the killers, and there is no general willingness to kill killers because killers can kill right back. Just ask the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, whom nobody has ever accused of anti-Bosnianism, but who steadfastly opposed any

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use of U.S. force whatsoever to protect the Bosnians. The Serbians, he explained over and over again to both the Bush and Clinton administrations, *would shoot back*. Nazi Germany could of course shoot back a hundred times more powerfully, so that the same objection was a hundred times more valid for Nazi Germany. That is why nobody fought the Nazis until the Nazis—or in the American case, the Japanese—attacked *them*.*

This therefore is the unvarnished face of the world in which we live, the world in which the Holocaust is as compelling a historical fact as the War of the Roses, the world in which the government of the United States of America must decide if, when, where, and how to intervene against aggressors and killers. That is not a choice that can be made without agonizing among contradictory responsibilities and it never was. But it has now been greatly complicated both by a severe bureaucratic deformation within the U.S. armed forces, and by a colossal overestimation of the capacities of that lowest common denominator of governments that is the United Nations.

LITTLE need be said about the military deformation, by now perfectly evident to all. For various reasons—ranging from the delayed recognition that the military professionals were abused by their political masters during the Vietnam war, and shabbily treated by Americans at large in the aftermath, to the unintended consequences of the 1987 Defense Reorganization Act,† from former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's deliberate downgrading of civilian control over military planning in the interests of his constant maneuvering against the Haig-Shultz State Department, to the unique role of that politically most astute of generals, Colin Powell—the proper equilibrium between the civilian and military leadership of the United States has been badly skewed, in two separate ways.

On the one hand, there has been an erosion of civilian authority, manifest in the effective veto power acquired by the military leadership over intervention decisions. Constitutionally, it is the civilian authorities alone who should decide whether, when, where, and how to intervene, albeit with such military advice as they care to solicit. There has been no *coup d'état*, and the Constitution has not been rewritten to place the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff above the President and his Secretary of Defense, but in real-life American politics a situation has been created in which those two civilians feel that they must defer to military preferences, because of the very real risk that they would otherwise be undermined *politically* by their nominal military servants. There has been so much practice of the Art of the Leak in place of the Art of War that, if Desert Storm had been a disaster, a complete dossier would have been ready to be rushed into print to place all the blame on President Bush—for purely military decisions as well.

Within the Pentagon's day-to-day administration, the erosion of civilian authority is palpable at all levels. Most notably, the Undersecretariat for Policy, once the key instrument of civilian supervision over military planning and military operations, and once occupied by the likes of Robert "Blowtorch" Komer who ate admirals and generals for breakfast, has been sadly reduced as compared to an imperious Joint Staff. Thus in smaller decisions as in the largest ones, military preferences prevail over civilian ones, contrary to both constitutional theory and the past practice of government.

And what are those military preferences? No doubt there are still one or two hopelessly outdated peaceniks around who imagine that the Pentagon is full of bellicose generals and admirals nervously juggling steel balls while eagerly searching world maps for possible wars to fight. The rest of us know that our senior military commanders have enthusiastically embraced the so-called Weinberger "doctrine."

This doctrine, authorized by no legislation and endorsed by no President, presumes nevertheless to rule out any U.S. military combat action whatsoever unless a long list of conditions is met. They include a victory fully guaranteed in advance by overwhelming force, irrevocable public support for whatever operations are undertaken skillfully or otherwise, and a precisely defined objective that may not, repeat not, be changed in accordance with shifting circumstances.

Under parallel conditions, hospital emergency rooms would refuse to accept any patients whose recovery was not certain, who would not agree to renounce a malpractice suit in advance, and who might develop other ailments while under treatment; and teachers would similarly refuse to admit children in their classrooms unless all their previous grades were straight A's, and all their previous conduct was exemplary.

Certainly the guarantees now routinely demanded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff before sanctioning U.S. military action are not of this world. Victory can never be guaranteed in advance; even a nation most patriotic by current Western standards is apt to criticize glaring military errors; and objectives alone cannot remain reliably fixed in a world in flux. The result—fully intended—is in practice to rule out military operations almost always and almost everywhere against enemies

* Britain and France did not attack Germany even after declaring war in 1939; there was no real war until the German offensive of May 1940.

† *Mea culpa*: in writing my *The Pentagon and the Art of War*, and in testimony in support of that legislation before the U.S. Congress, I disregarded the negative repercussions fully anticipated by former Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger, among others.

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who might shoot back (the Somalia intervention, Restore Hope, was positively offered by the Joint Chiefs, precisely because they wrongly believed that there would be no shooting).

So established and so widely accepted is this doctrine of inaction that civilian State Department and White House officials who would want to interpose formidable and supremely well-protected U.S. military forces between cruel aggressors and unarmed victims are branded as irresponsible warmongers who would "toy with American lives," and are very effectively silenced. Instead of a proper equilibrium between diplomats who should professionally favor diplomatic solutions and military leaders who should professionally offer military options, we suffer from a paralyzing reversal of roles, in which the military simply refuses to offer military options when asked for them and is not disciplined to do so. Abnormally enough, nowadays the normal responses of the Joint Staff to civilian requests for usable military options are long, political-sciencey memos explaining all the political, cultural, and psychological reasons why nothing can be done by force.

INTERSERVICE bureaucratic calculations play their nefarious part as well. Today's precision airpower would be the instrument of choice in most cases, the one least likely to result in U.S. casualties. Yet in order to sustain a log-rolling policy that allocates budget cuts equally among the services, replicating the cold-war structure of forces on a smaller scale (as if today's world were identical to that of the cold war), any independent use of airpower is vehemently resisted.

Not least has this been the case with Bosnia. Reporters looking for answers to the commonsense question of why U.S. airpower could not be used in Bosnia have found the Joint Staff replete with officers eager to lecture them about the general futility of airpower and its particular uselessness against elusive militias, while ignoring the abundance of stable, well-defined ("high-contrast") targets such as main battle tanks and the field artillery pieces used to shell Sarajevo.

The same voices have eagerly endorsed the disingenuous Anglo-French claim that airpower could not be used anyway, because it would endanger UN troops on the ground. Instead of breaking village sieges, the British battalion has pathetically begged Serb militiamen to let through a few food trucks now and then; instead of silencing Serb fire, the French battalion even allowed Serb militiamen to shoot a top Muslim leader riding in its own convoy—without firing back. And so it is that the highly effective instrument of U.S. airpower was renounced for the sake of symbolic troop contingents that spent much of their time performing for the TV cameras, while doing almost nothing actually to protect the Muslims left defenseless by the UN's own arms embargo.

The ultimate implication of the Weinberger doctrine is that U.S. military forces should be reserved for self-defense alone, on the lines of the Swiss armed forces. If that strategy is indeed to be adopted, then surely we should drastically reduce U.S. military forces (and their higher command even more) to the dimensions of a militia writ large, because there are no plausible aggressors against U.S. territory. But, of course, our military leadership has wanted both superpower resources at its command and a small-power strategy that would exclude the use of force to protect American values in the larger scheme of things, including the defense of the defenseless against mass murder.

Entrenched institutional attitudes count for much more than personalities, yet the selection of General John M. Shalikashvili as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provides grounds for optimism. As a less political general than Colin Powell, he is less likely to resist civilian authority, if indeed it should be effectively asserted. And Shalikashvili's current position as Supreme Allied Commander-Europe has no doubt impressed on him that nonintervention too carries a high price.

THERE are, however, no such grounds for optimism regarding the other great complication that now attends the always agonizingly difficult decision of whether, when, where, and how to intervene against today's aggressors and killers—the "multilateralist" delusion.

Of the resolve of our traditional European allies, nothing at all need be said after their shameful failure in Yugoslavia, except to note parenthetically the supreme innocence of leaders who fondly imagine themselves to be hard-bitten cynics: they truly believe—they really do—that their countries will evade the foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences, that the bill for their inexcusable inaction will not be tendered, with penalties, with compound interest.

No delusions persist on that score in the United States. What does persist, especially within the ranks of the Clinton administration, is a gross overestimation of the capacities and potential of the United Nations as an instrument of peace. That in turn is shaped by a well-established, indeed conventional, view about the past and possible future of the UN that still lingers, even though the Bosnian events should already have exposed it as exactly wrong.

The tale begins amid the bright hopes of 1945, when the United Nations was established by the victorious allies to keep the peace thereafter. Upon being notified of a war, imminent or already under way, the Great Powers, meeting as the UN Security Council, were to investigate and

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deliberate, and then variously to warn, demand, threaten, or fight conjointly as the case might be, so as to prevent or stop the war, secure a prompt withdrawal of the invaders if any, and/or obtain compensation for any damage inflicted by the aggressors.

In other words, "collective security" through the UN was to replace both unilateral Great Power interventions (which often ended up by starting wider wars) and self-defense by the lesser fry themselves (normally hard to distinguish from aggression). And, of course, the Great Powers themselves would not fight one another—they were still the "Allies" after all—but instead resolve their differences diplomatically in the Security Council chamber.

Because Great Power wars were ruled out, while any fighting among lesser powers would be stopped before it had properly begun, the UN and the workings of its Security Council would make warfare itself virtually useless as an instrument of state power. It followed that the accumulation of the means of war would be eventually recognized as equally useless. The UN's collective security would therefore ensure both peace now, and disarmament in due course.

But then, the conventional version continues, the gears of the splendid machine of collective security were fatally blocked by the advent of the cold war. Because each of the Great Powers could veto any action by the UN Security Council at any time, the emergence of globally hostile rival camps meant that the Council could not confront threats to peace which originated in either camp—where most of them in fact did originate.

As it happens, the United States did succeed in securing the endorsement of the UN Security Council for military action in Korea, but that resulted from what was essentially a mere technicality: because Stalin miscalculated, the Soviet Union simply failed to exercise its veto.

Nothing of substance ensued anyway: the North Korean and later the Chinese invasions were not stopped and then reversed by the mechanism of collective security, but had to be fought step-by-step by the forces of the United States and its own strategic allies, exactly as in the bad old days before the UN. The only difference was that the U.S. commander-in-chief was labeled the UN commander, the U.S. and allied forces were called UN forces, and UN flags were flown in place of U.S. or other national flags.

After Korea, there were no more fortuitous exceptions: each time the Security Council convened, the Soviet Union would veto U.S.-sponsored actions, and vice versa. During the 1950's, 1960's, 1970's, and into the 1980's, everyone therefore knew better than to expect the UN to assure peace through collective security. It was very clear then that whatever international outrages the United States would not challenge, with or without its own allies, would remain unchallenged.

Then came the gradual abandonment of Soviet grand strategy by Gorbachev, the crisis in the Gulf, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the final end of the cold war. Repeated in a hundred editorials and after-dinner speeches, the conventional wisdom now held that the UN could and would at long last fulfill the hopes that had attended its birth. No longer mechanically blocked by reciprocal superpower hostility, the machine of collective security would henceforth function as intended, to confront threats and defeat them if matters reached that extremity.

The successful conduct of the Gulf crisis and Gulf war within a UN framework, with Security Council authorizations at each step of the way, was presented as firm evidence of the dawn of a new age, in which aggressors would be dissuaded first of all, and if need be confronted by the Security Council, and if need be defeated by a broad array of UN-sponsored coalition forces.

THE role of the United States could not exactly be ignored in this rendition of the Gulf crisis and Gulf war, but neither was it fully admitted that what had happened was no more than a U.S. action in UN garb, in effect a Korea II, rather than a UN action with the United States acting as its chief executive agent. Certainly, if the United States had accepted the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait, it would have been accepted all around. And if the United States had not engaged Iraq, nobody would have engaged Iraq. Because *that* is the crucial point, the willingness to engage.

We do not live in a pre-1914 world of rival Great Powers eager to get involved in any crisis that comes along, governed by ambitious elites who see every local conflict as full of promising opportunities, and in command of military forces that can freely be sent into action whenever and wherever combat could pay off in added territory, added diplomatic influence, or both.

In today's world, the ruling elites of developed states have no interest whatsoever in territorial aggrandizement or diplomatic influence gained by force; they regard crises and local conflicts not as opportunities but as traps to be avoided at all costs; and only a very few developed states are still capable of war under any circumstances except, perhaps, for self-defense strictly defined. Given the general unwillingness to engage, it is not surprising that if we subtract whatever the U.S. did in the Gulf conflict from all that was done within the framework of the UN, the result we obtain is zero.

The implication is not that the UN Security Council was useless as a venue during the Gulf crisis—actually it was exceedingly useful for the pseudo-multilateral diplomacy of the Bush ad-

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ministration. But it does mean that the chamber, furniture, fittings, and procedures of the UN Security Council should not be construed as a sentient being itself capable of acting in place of the United States, able to assume responsibilities that the United States refuses to accept. In theory, nobody with any sense could possibly believe otherwise. In practice, "Let us leave it to the UN Security Council" is the commonplace slogan of the new post-cold-war isolationism.

Matters would stand quite otherwise if, in the political life of the world's developed states at least, there were a widespread moral compulsion to protect *Homo sapiens,* as bottle-nosed dolphins and many other species are now protected. Such a moral compulsion to protect *Homo sapiens* would be reflected in necessarily activist policies in the face of unambiguous international aggressions, featuring, for example, mass expulsions and killings of unarmed civilians. Such activist policies would in turn be most effectively implemented not by single states, but through collective security. And such collective security would best be organized within the framework of the UN.

But, of course, there is no such moral compulsion; hence there is no obligatory activism in the face of aggression; hence there is no national political basis for international collective security. It hardly matters therefore if the gears of the UN machine are blocked or not: the essential fuel—the willingness to engage aggression—is missing in any case.

The agony of Bosnia—only made worse by the diplomacy of UN officials, by ineffectual forces under the UN flag, and by the UN arms embargo imposed on the Bosnian Muslims that was the extortionate price for both—has now fully contradicted the conventional view of the UN's past, and thus of its future potential. We may now look back to recognize that the cold war did not in fact incapacitate the UN, for what has no capacity cannot be incapacitated.

On the contrary, the cold war actually inflated the UN's apparent importance, because when the superpowers did choose to settle local conflicts, it was usually convenient for both to have their bilateral arrangements rubber-stamped in the UN Security Council, and sometimes to have UN-flagged units on the scene to observe the resulting cease-fire or armistice lines, monitor troop and weapon movements if constrained, and try to intercept third-party infiltrators if possible.* But in Bosnia, as in other locales of aggression, there are no Great Powers eagerly intervening by proxy, which might eventually reach an impasse that UN-stamped arrangements could then conveniently freeze.

THE upshot is that in today's post-cold-war world, the UN can offer only its endless procedural delays, its always very costly and often corrupt administration of subordinate agencies, and the lowest-common-denominator diplomacy of its Secretary General. It should not be invoked also to offer an alibi for American inaction in the face of barbarous aggression.

The world's only Great Power, infinitely more powerful militarily than Croats, or Serbs, or both, has stood by passively to watch horrors not seen on European soil since the Holocaust. Let us at least confront what we have not done, and what we have become: a nation supremely well-armed that has allowed the marginally armed to terrorize and kill the unarmed.

Is that what Americans would have wanted to do, if properly led? And is that what Americans want to be? If the answer is yes, our children are destined to live in a nightmare world of unresisted aggressions. If the answer is no, we should cure our military deformation forthwith, and liberate ourselves from the delusion that our leftover cold-war allies, or the mere abstraction that is the UN, will somehow act without strongly expressed American leadership, and an effective use of American power.

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* Because of China's role as the sometime protector of the Khmer Rouge, the UN operation in Cambodia has assumed cold-war lineaments, and has functioned accordingly—i.e., sufficiently well, so far. Nevertheless, the huge monetary cost, characteristic of all UN activities but magnified by notoriously lax management in Cambodia, virtually rules out a repetition; indeed, the feeble UN monitoring of the Angolan elections contributed to that country's regression into civil war.

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Islam & the West (including Manhattan)

Martin Kramer

On a weekend in New York this past June, the Middle East Institute at Columbia University convened a conference with the title "Under Siege: Islam and Democracy." Invitations to the conference spoke of a "gathering atmosphere of crisis" which had "stimulated in this country a sense of confrontation between Islam and democracy," and which the organizers hoped their conference would help to "dispel." That ominous atmosphere of crisis, the invitation asserted, had "most recently been fueled by reactions to the bombing of the World Trade Center" in February.

Thus, while downtown New York limped from a blast that had killed six, injured 1,000, and done half-a-billion-dollars' worth of damage, uptown New York anguished over the "reactions" to the blast—as if they, and not the terrorist act itself, were what had inflamed the "crisis." To the assembled academics, the worrisome "reactions" included, no doubt, any number of newspaper headlines in the style of "Muslim Arrested."

But in point of fact, Muslims *had* been arrested—men whose commitment to their understanding of Islam provided motive for their acts. Within days of the bombing, evidence collected by the FBI had produced a strong prima-facie case against a number of recent immigrants from Arab countries, who were duly arrested and charged. Prior to their arrest, the suspects had frequented the Jersey City mosque of Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, confidant of the assassins of Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, who had been using his American pulpit to lambaste the West and preach Islamic revolution in Egypt. The press, the public, and agencies of public order thus had every reason to ask whether the bombing had been intended, by some stretch of logic, to serve the interests of Islam.

Fortunately, even as the participants at Columbia's conference busily deconstructed the media's putative bias against Islam, the authorities understood that the most dangerous possible effect of the World Trade Center bombing was not offensive headlines or attacks by bigots against innocent Arab-Americans. It was more bombings. Their hunch resulted in the arrest of eight more of the Sheikh's acolytes and translators, allegedly caught in the act of mixing fertilizer and diesel fuel, with which they intended to deconstruct UN and FBI headquarters, as well as the Lincoln and Holland tunnels. The Columbia conferees had hoped to "contribute to a *modus vivendi* between Islam and the West." A week later, the FBI's round of arrests made a more thorough contribution to just that end.

Through all this, it was hard to discern any serious effort to place the bombing and arrests in a credible context. Following the capture of the alleged conspirators in the UN bomb plot, New York Mayor David Dinkins adopted what by then had become the characteristic tone of evasion. In warning New Yorkers against projecting "outrage onto the whole community from which these individuals came," the mayor did his civic duty. But he leaped headlong into surmise when he determined that "these are individuals acting on their own, or in concert among other criminal collaborators." In fact, there was every likelihood that the bombing plot was political as well as criminal, and that its political context extended far beyond New York.

Dinkins could be excused—he was out of his depth—but many of America's academic interpreters of Islam, at the Columbia conference and elsewhere, in effect seconded such evasions. Some simply averred that the bombing and the foiled conspiracy, even if hatched by Muslims, had nothing to do with any extant reading of Islam. Some offered that the bombing was the work of "extremists," and that the only way to undermine them was by supporting "moderates." (On further elaboration, these "moderates" often turned out to be other Islamic fundamentalists, who may have drawn the line at blowing up skyscrapers and traffic tunnels but otherwise subscribed to the same principles as the "extremists.") One instant expert, writing in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, confidently categorized the bombing as an "isolated event" which only "frus-

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trated cold warriors," sold on an "Islamic conspiracy theory," could possibly tie to other events like terrorist attacks in Egypt.

IN SHORT, conventional wisdom decreed that the bombing occurred in a vacuum: it was pathological, not political. This abdication on the part of the professional interpreters of Islam left it to the investigative press to draw an outline of the suspects' murky world. Intensified reportage from New York, Khartoum, and Cairo began to untangle an informal but far-flung network of Islamic activism—a network which most academic experts had denied even existed. Many of the threads led by twists and turns back to Afghanistan, where Arab Muslim money and volunteers had contributed to the successful *jihad* against Soviet forces in the 1980's.

This reportage also raised an issue that has yet to be addressed: the extent to which the U.S., which also backed the Afghan *jihad*, coddled its Arab veterans with visas and other protection after the war ended. Sheikh Abdel-Rahman himself had been a fund-raiser and meddler in Afghanistan. The State Department's lame explanation for his (repeated) entries into the U.S.—a computer error—suggested a preference for evasion in government as well.

In any case, were it not for the press, whose coverage of Islam is routinely maligned for its supposed bias, none of these fascinating lines of inquiry would have been opened up. A public hungry for analysis would have had to subsist only on the thin gruel of banalities served up by the scholars.

That which American academics and officials evaded, many Arab interpreters openly denied. They professed astonishment that anyone could attribute the planning or execution of such an attack to any Arab or Muslim. Rather than admit even the remote possibility, they did what they have long done: they blamed the Mossad, Israel's secret service, or they simply blamed the Jews.

This view was not confined to the fundamentalist fringe press (where it flourished). It also surfaced in some of the leading newspapers in the Arab world. The columnists of the Cairo daily *al-Ahram*, which purports to be the most respected of Arab newspapers, led the charge. One writer announced with certainty that "the Islamic groups could not have carried out such an action," because it "would have such serious repercussions for them. Many of them could find no better place than the West, and particularly the United States, to take refuge in." Nor could any Palestinian have done it, for the same reasons. But Israel, the writer went on, had long sought to tarnish the image of the Arabs, and to undermine Arab and Muslim communities in Europe and America through its agents. The conclusion: "Look for Israel's and the Mossad's hand in this dirty operation."

Another columnist in *al-Ahram* called the plotters behind the bombing both "devilish and clever," since they had found in Muhammad Salameh, the principal suspect, someone combining the perfect features of a fall guy: he was a Palestinian, at one time he carried an Egyptian passport, and he belonged to a group of Muslim extremists. "Some widespread international planning must have gone into finding this needle in the haystack," the writer insinuated, and then supplied the clue:

> The only way to put the puzzle together is to resort to the Israeli Mossad. It alone is capable of deciphering the act, pinpointing the real culprits, and revealing the real objectives behind this terrorist action, which ultimately serves only one party—which is, coincidentally or not, Israel itself.

If the responsible Arab press fingered the Mossad, others in the Arab world glared accusingly at the inhabitants of New York, who deserved divine retribution. Hezbollah's radio in Lebanon offered this commentary: "We have the right to ask about the crazy and shameless residents of New York, its gangsters, nightclubs, and brothels. The answer emerges very clearly that the explosion that rocked New York merely expressed its identity." This apocalyptic vision gained respectability in a column in the Beirut daily *al-Safir*, the newspaper that is supposed to represent the views of the serious, progressive Left:

> New York is the city of crime, the Mafia, and organized gangsters who are stronger than armies. It is the jungle where one cannot move without fearing for one's life. New York is the capital of the Jews with all their perversions, including politics, sex, media, forgery, cinema, drugs, and money laundering. It is the greatest arena for crime, most terrible fortress of discrimination, and ugliest example of class and race oppression.

New Yorkers, the columnist concluded, were thus in no position to claim that terror came to their city only when the "dark-skinned and red-eyed Arabs appeared."

THE press of Cairo and Beirut will continue to debate whether the bombing of the World Trade Center was a Mossad plot or a blast of hellfire. But for the people most at risk, the question is whether the bombing was indeed the disembodied work of individual criminals, cut loose from any known reading of Islam. Those who take this view may imagine that they are promoting interfaith understanding, but it is an approach that misses the bombing's import entirely—and perhaps helps to invite its repetition.

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There *is* a wider context. The Magjid al-Salaam mosque in Jersey City stands at the far edge of a vast pool of resentment in Islam, fed by a steady stream of fundamentalist complaint against the West in general and the United States in particular. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the survival of the United States as the sole great power, the slogan of a "new world order"—these developments have brought that pool of resentment to overflowing. The bombing should be read as a warning: that a part of Islam dissents from the new ascendancy of the United States. Evasion and denial will not make this animus disappear.

The first context to be grasped is the world inhabited by the defendants in the bombing and conspiracy. As fundamentalists and immigrants, they personify the discontent that afflicts much of Islam today. For fundamentalism and migration have been the two major avenues of escape from the desperate crisis that now besets Muslim countries. They are also the two major sources of friction between Islam and the West. It is at the points of overlap between them, in storefront mosques from Brooklyn, New York, to Bradford, England, that angry preaching wins an especially attentive hearing.

For growing numbers of the young, the poor, and the credulous in the lands of Islam, fundamentalism has provided both escape and hope in circumstances that grow more dire with each passing year. These movements express a widespread frustration at the inability of regimes to deliver on the promise of a quantum leap to power and prosperity, whether by imitation of the Soviet model or by mimicry of capitalism. In appealing to that frustration, fundamentalists propose to abandon all the political and social models of the West. Instead, raising the slogan "Islam is the solution," they offer the vague but alluring ideas of Islamic government and Islamic economics. Most importantly, they hold the West responsible for the present malaise of Islam—a malaise that is understood to be the result of a deliberate Western effort to destroy Islam.

So far, this brand of fundamentalism has seized power only in Islamic lands more distant from the West—Iran in the heart of Asia, Sudan in the heart of Africa. But recently Islamic fundamentalism has made impressive gains on the Muslim shores of the Mediterranean, especially in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, and Turkey. These are the Muslim societies closest to the West in geography and culture, and the spread of fundamentalism there is compelling evidence for the depth of the crisis in Islam. The zealots have yet to acquire power in a Mediterranean country, but they have come close in Algeria, and they may yet make a serious bid in Egypt.

Muslim immigration to the West has been an equally telling sign of crisis. This immigration, especially to Western Europe and North America, is a result of the vast asymmetry of opportunity between the economies of the West and Islam. Since decolonization, the movement of millions of Muslims has rapidly transformed Islam into the second religion in much of the West. The influx continues unabated, as the fast-growing populations of Muslim countries far outstrip productive capacity.

In recent years, this immigration has taken on a new character, drawing upon more traditional classes in Muslim societies. For the newer immigrants, seeking a livelihood in the lands of unbelief is not without social stigma. Many of them have justified their choice by renouncing acculturation—this, at a time when economic recession in the West has diminished the willingness of host societies to assimilate foreigners anyway. The result has been a backlash of bigotry, epitomized by the repeated and sometimes deadly attacks on Muslim foreigners in Germany.

The prevalence of fundamentalism among more recent Muslim immigrants has tempted fundamentalist states and movements to open a second front in their struggle for political and cultural domination at home. The Paris bomb attacks of 1985 and 1986, the agitation against Salman Rushdie in Britain, and the bombing of the World Trade Center have uncovered remote outposts of Muslim resentment in the West which are highly susceptible to suggestion by fundamentalists abroad.

To be sure, the vast majority of Muslim immigrants to the West, including fundamentalists, have come in search of opportunity, and would never imagine committing acts of political violence. But there are those who simply await a word of encouragement or inspiration offered by a visiting cleric or foreign diplomat. This is an unpleasant truth, but one which must no longer be ignored by immigration services, law-enforcement agencies, and organized Muslim communities themselves.

THE second, broader context of the bombing has to do with what might be called the fundamentalists' narrative of history. According to this narrative, the grand objective, first of Christendom and then of the West, has been the subordination, if not the destruction, of Islam. The medieval Crusades represented the first attempt; but Islam contained and repelled that aggression, which ultimately left no trace. Modern European imperialism, a far more dynamic force, constituted the next attempt; this proved far more successful, bringing nearly all of Islam under European rule. But while Europe promptly stole the wealth and independence of Muslims, it did not succeed in destroying their identity. The tenacious preservation of their identity has given them the power to rise up in wars of resistance, to reclaim their formal independence and control of their resources.

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But now—the narrative continues—Islam faces the most dangerous and insidious challenge yet: America, as heir to Europe and hence to the role of leader of unbelief against Islam, has produced a model of culture, society, and politics which pretends to universal validity. This model exercises so seductive an appeal that it threatens to bring about what one fundamentalist thinker has called "the extinction of the distinctive identity of the Islamic community." This final assault on Islam is now concealed beneath the American slogan of a "new world order."

Rashid al-Ghannushi, exiled leader of the Tunisian Islamic movement, puts the case most succinctly. The "new world order," he says,

> is even more oppressive and severe than the old world order, which tried to banish Islam and ruin it. For the first time, the United Nations has become a real international government with a president—none other than the President of the United States. It has a legal branch to endorse American decisions—the Security Council—and an executive branch, in the form of the U.S. military. It has a financial apparatus—the World Bank and other giant financial institutions—and it has a massive media machine. Government by the United Nations is really government by the United States, which is the main characteristic of the "new world order." This "new world order," from the point of view of its intellectual content, its ideology, and its religion, isn't new. It is simply American hegemony over the world, clothed in the ideology of human rights.

This kind of logic no doubt lay behind the choice of the United Nations as the target of the second bomb plot. Ghannushi, it should be added, is presented by his Western apologists as the most moderate and least anti-American fundamentalist leader.

In the fundamentalist narrative, Muslims are not without their defenses against the "new world order." The hope has been most effectively articulated by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, mentor and oracle of Lebanon's Hezbollah. His purpose has been to persuade Muslims that "reports about the multifaceted and unrivaled strength of the United States are greatly exaggerated." While America looms large, "its shadow is greater than its substance. It possesses great military power, but that power is not supported by commensurate political or economic strength." Even its much-touted democracy is deeply flawed. And so the collapse of the Soviet Union, far from confirming American power, only presages its fall. Within a generation or two, America will lose its power, and Islam will begin to realize its own massive potential.

"Power is not the eternal destiny of the powerful," Fadlallah reminds the faithful. "Weakness is not the eternal destiny of the weak. We may not have the actual power the U.S. has, but we had the power previously and we have now the foundations to develop that power in the future." Islam might even end by bringing America and Europe into its fold; already, the spread of Islam into these areas

> represents a great problem for the arrogant powers that seek to preserve the status quo and their own character. We should remember that Hülegü [the Mongol conqueror of Baghdad in 1258] overwhelmed the lands of Islam, but Islam overwhelmed the minds of his descendants, who became Muslims. Their power became Islamic power. I believe it is possible that Islam will storm many of the bastions that are now a danger to Islam, turning them to the benefit of Islam.

AMERICA's assault on Islamic identity, its bloated power cloaked as a "new world order," its hidden vulnerabilities, Islam's ultimate triumph, the final conversion of America—millions have been irradiated by this narrative, which might well have served as the underlying motif for the bombing of the World Trade Center. When the FBI arrested Muslims for the bombing, Fadlallah himself was quick to blame Israel and "Jewish circles in the United States." Yet he, and many other fundamentalist theoreticians, had been assuring Muslims repeatedly that if they looked, they would find "chinks in the armor of the United States, and we can penetrate these chinks and enlarge them." It could have come as no surprise to him that some Muslims living in the United States overheard these admonitions and acted upon them.

An Iranian commentator put the bombing precisely in the context of the fundamentalist narrative. Asadollah Badamchian, the deputy head of the Iranian judiciary for political affairs, and a well-known hardliner, wrote an analysis that was published the day *before* the arrest of Muhammad Salameh, when no one could yet make the damaging association between the bombing and Islam:

> If the United States cannot safeguard even one floor of the most important building in the heart of New York, how can [it] ever put into practice the foolish policy of Bush—the establishment of a new world order or a new chapter of U.S. domination?

And Badamchian concluded:

> Even though initially tyranny inflicts anguish on the oppressed, ultimately divine wrath gives the devout persons the upper hand and they annihilate the tyrant.

That the seemingly omnipotent U.S. was vulnerable at its heart, and that the "new world order" could be stopped—this was the message the fundamentalists were reading into the bombing before the evidence began to point precisely in their direction.

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PARADOXICALLY, of course, and thanks to the arrests, the bombing had the opposite of its intended effect. Fundamentalists who would have been only too glad to hammer home Badamchian's point about American vulnerability instead had to denounce the bombing, blame it on Israel, and declare the United States off-limits to their struggle. Even Sheikh Abdel-Rahman, who was later indicted for, among other things, ordering the bombing, pronounced it incompatible with Islam. In the end, a chorus of fundamentalist voices affirmed the immunity of American soil.

The American response to the bombing also belied the fundamentalist portrayal of the United States as arch foe of the Muslims. The Egyptian fundamentalist newspaper *al-Nur* ran a commentary acknowledging that there was no popular wave of retribution against American Muslims, no random arrests, no mass interrogations, no storming of mosques in search of terrorists—the opposite, in fact, of what usually occurs in Egypt. Even the suspects "were treated in a civilized manner, and their lawyers were allowed to be present with them as soon as they were arrested." The simple workings of due process conveyed an image of immense power. So did the endless footage on Arab and Muslim television of the skyline of New York, unaltered by the bombing. In the end, ironically, one lasting effect of the bombing and trial may be to fill Arabian nights with many more dreams of Manhattan.

But Manhattan's own nightmare could recur. The fundamentalist struggle continues back in the capitals of Islam. It has lasted for nearly two decades, and its outcome is still far from decided. The Shah of Iran, one nemesis of the fundamentalists, is gone, but other secular kings and presidents rule on. Women are returning to the veil in Egypt, but a woman has become prime minister of Turkey. Islam, in short, remains divided against itself, and seems to be moving toward a civil war between two antagonistic blocs—social blocs within countries, and strategic blocs among states. The dividing issue is whether or not Islam should exist as a closed system, in constant tension with the world. The United States has obvious preferences in this struggle, and it is always possible that it may be threatened for holding them. It would therefore be foolish to rely on fundamentalist denunciations of this latest bombing. They were made under extreme duress.

Two bits of truth lie beneath the bomb rubble and should be embedded in the wall of Western defense. First, no one has the clairvoyance to sort the "moderates" from the "extremists." Those Arabs who waged *jihad* in Afghanistan, including some of the defendants now on trial, were supposed to be America's domesticated fundamentalists. They were often cited as prime evidence that not all Muslim fundamentalists are anti-American, that they are a "politically 'tamable'" force, in the words of one former CIA analyst. But as the World Trade Center bombing suggests, the conduct even of those fundamentalists who were once American allies and clients cannot be predicted, even in the short term. In dealing with Islamic fundamentalism, the United States now has an obligation to its own citizenry to err on the side of caution.

Second, the systematic preaching of hatred eventually will produce violence. Even if others strike the detonator, the kind of vitriol against America so widely retailed by the likes of Sheikh Abdel-Rahman is the fuel. And even if, in the trial of the alleged plotters in the New York bombing, the court should rule that the defendants acted alone, they are not lone men. They belong to a society with its own code, which they call true Islam, and whose interpreters have condemned America as the seat of evil.

As the bombing trials unfold, those who have made blithe assurances about "Islamism" would do well to reexamine the content and appeal of this code. The more they continue to evade hard truths, the more their credibility is bound to be questioned by the press and public alike. As for government, the case of the Sheikh should be a reminder that the preaching of hatred is still protected speech in America—which is why it is vital to keep such preachers at a safe distance from America's shores, even when they claim to bear the divine message of Islam.

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Wilson's Character

Jeremy Rabkin

ECONOMISTS do not like to use terms like covetousness or greed. Political scientists do not like to use terms like tyranny or corruption. Social scientists often say that such conventional categories are too vague or "loaded" for the purposes of serious science. But the main objection to them may be that they are simply too obvious and accessible. Most people, after all, already know quite a bit about how society works, without instruction from social scientists.

For this reason, as the economist Albert Hirschmann once noted, social scientists often seem to feel a professional "compulsion to produce shock and paradox," to arrive at a finding "that shows how badly common-sense understanding has led us astray," and even to "defend as moral or useful . . . social behavior that is widely considered to be reprehensible." Yet in a 1980 lecture, Hirschmann speculated that this sort of "immoralist vocation" had begun to seem so routine and familiar in social science that it might finally become more "intellectually challenging"—and thus might now present "almost the same surprise value and air of paradox"—"to rediscover the need for morality."

The recent work of James Q. Wilson has certainly confirmed this prediction. To be sure, Wilson's earlier work never betrayed any marked "compulsion to shock," and he had established himself, by the 1970's, as one of America's foremost political scientists without straying very far from "common-sense understanding." But much of Wilson's early work was animated by a definite skepticism toward moralistic nostrums in politics.

Wilson himself has acknowledged that the focus on moral questions in his work of the last ten years or so is something of a departure: when asked to survey changes in public-policy thinking for the *Public Interest* in 1985, he offered an essay, "On the Rediscovery of Character," which emphasized how much more important "private virtue" had come to seem for "public policy." Wilson's *Crime and Human Nature* (1985, written in collaboration with the experimental psychologist Richard Herrnstein) gave extensive attention to questions of personal character, and a collection of Wilson's shorter pieces issued in 1991 bears the apt general title, *On Character.* Now Wilson has published *The Moral Sense,** his most ambitious look yet at the sources of moral character.

Plainly, after developing these themes for over a decade, Wilson's attention to morality cannot be regarded as a whim or a stunt. But there remains a distinct "air of paradox" (in Hirschmann's phrase) about Wilson's recent work. For the more he has turned his attention to these moral questions, the more he has moved from "common sense" into more quantitative, arcane, or "scientific" social science. This probably says something interesting about the intellectual character of James Q. Wilson. It may say something even more interesting about the problem of restoring moral issues to the analysis of American politics.

II

WILSON'S work on morality comes at a time when he has attained the highest honors in the world of professional political science. In 1990 the American Political Science Association recognized his career of "distinguished scholarly contribution" with its James Madison Award. He served the following year as president of the Association. His *American Government: Institutions and Policies* has gone through four editions since 1981 and remains the best-selling textbook in its field.

Not only is Wilson one of America's foremost political scientists, he is also a very experienced participant in public-policy debates. From as far back as the Johnson and Nixon administrations, Wilson has repeatedly served on presidential commissions and advisory panels. More recently, he attained particular prominence as an intellectual authority for the Bush administration's "war on drugs." Wilson has also been a regular contributor to policy debates through articles in nonacademic magazines—like this one—since the early 60's.

One can certainly discern a kind of pattern in the topical progression of Wilson's research in-

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terests over the years—which is to say that his current writings on character and morals do not come totally out of the blue. He began with works on urban politics: *Negro Politics* (1960, mostly about black involvement in Chicago and New York politics); *The Amateur Democrat* (1962, about reform political clubs in New York and Los Angeles); *City Politics* (1963, written with fellow political scientist Edward C. Banfield, about the political pressures on municipal government). Later, much of Wilson's attention veered into studies of specialized organizations other than city governments: *Political Organizations* (1978), *The Politics of Regulation* (1980), *Bureaucracy* (1989).

But in the meantime, Wilson published a study of local police—*Varieties of Police Behavior* (1968)—which was in many ways a logical extension both of his emerging interest in specialized agencies and of his original interest in urban politics, as police conduct became a source of controversy in many cities during the 1960's. Wilson then took up a series of basic policy issues concerning crime control, published in *Thinking About Crime* (1975, revised edition 1983), and pursued more specialized studies on federal crime-control efforts (*The Investigators*, 1978).

It might seem a logical jump from work on the institutions and policies of crime control to the intellectual premises of criminology, which he surveyed in *Crime and Human Nature*. And from there it might seem another logical jump to look at the grounds in human nature for rejecting criminal conduct—which is one way of describing the subject of *The Moral Sense*.

And yet Wilson's current work really is quite different in method and focus from most of his previous writings. First, method: in an essay published in the mid-1980's, Wilson says that a particular view "so accords with common sense in countless aspects of ordinary life that, for many purposes, its value is beyond dispute." And in fact, in his earlier writings Wilson proceeded by charmingly direct appeals to common sense. He gathered evidence—often by directly interviewing participants in urban party organizations, police forces, government bureaucracies, or whatever it might be—and then, with clear examples, tried to paint a picture of how this activity "works." He rarely offered statistics, let alone statistical regressions. By contrast, much of the "evidence" in *The Moral Sense* comes from controlled experiments with infants, biochemical studies of brain functioning, and ethnographic studies of primitive tribes.

As for focus, most of Wilson's earlier writings could rely on a common-sense method because never far from the surface was the citizen's question—how is this going to turn out for us? The questions asked presupposed that the answers would be of political interest and importance. In *The Moral Sense*, the political implications are much more indirect, much more remote; the book says almost nothing directly about public policy. It is, in this sense as in others, much more abstract in character.

Finally, Wilson's latest work is different not only in method and focus but in its basic view of human nature. In the past Wilson usually stressed the importance of ordinary incentives in explaining the behavior of political actors. This was also the main emphasis of his studies on crime. Even most criminals, he argued, are rational enough to be affected by incentives, so if we make the penalties for crime more swift and certain, we have a better chance of discouraging criminal conduct. *The Moral Sense*, by contrast, is a deliberate challenge to the assumption that human conduct can be adequately explained in terms of the individual's calculation of self-interest.

For many political scientists, the alternative to economic-style analysis is to explore the cultural climate in which political actors operate. As there is an obvious element of common sense in this approach, too, Wilson in the past showed considerable openness to such cultural interpretations. Thus, a central theme in *City Politics* was the differing "ethos" of working-class, ethnic voters as opposed to middle-class Yankee voters, which Wilson (and co-author Banfield) insisted was a genuine reflection of differing attitudes and could not be reduced simply to differing incentives. Similarly, *Crime and Human Nature* argued that the Victorian culture of 19th-century America produced a long-term decrease in crime by emphasizing self-restraint and that contemporary America, by emphasizing "self-expression," has greatly exacerbated the problem of crime control. But here again *The Moral Sense* differs in avoiding any close analysis of the moral pressures in contemporary American or Western "culture."

III

THE central argument of Wilson's new book is that moral impulses or sentiments are not, at bottom, the product of this or that culture but rather the reflection of a universal human nature. Wilson directly disputes the assumption of most anthropologists that "man is the product of culture" and "has no nature other than an ability to acquire a culture." He insists instead that certain underlying moral patterns are common to all human cultures, from the most primitive to the most modern and sophisticated. At the same time, these patterns cannot be adequately explained by the economist's assumption that individuals simply act on calculations of self-interest. Indeed, Wilson denies that moral judgments are ultimately grounded in reason at all.

Accordingly, *The Moral Sense* does not try to refute the arguments of those contemporary philosophers who claim that no moral norms can be

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demonstrated by reason. Rather, the book plunges into a demonstration that most people everywhere, in their daily lives, plainly do act in accord with certain moral dispositions—or at least feel the tug of moral sentiment, even when other desires or circumstances prompt them to disregard their disposition to right action. The book highlights four moral "sentiments" in particular, through separate chapters on "sympathy," "fairness," "duty," and "self-control." Wilson argues that any form of ongoing human life is virtually inconceivable without these sentiments, or dispositions, and that we consequently find them operating among isolated, primitive tribes and in very young children and even in extreme situations, as with prisoners of war.

The book seeks to explain how these sentiments, rooted in human biology, are nurtured by family life and then, in Wilson's view, extended to larger communities. The moral achievement of the modern world, he argues, is to have induced people to "universalize" moral dispositions, to apply them even to strangers and people of distinctly different backgrounds. But the underlying "moral sense" remains essentially the same.

One of the most impressive features of the book is the remarkable range of sources it marshals for its argument. Like all of Wilson's work, it manages to integrate a great deal of disparate material into an ongoing argument that never loses its momentum or its clarity. Along the way, it draws on studies from anthropology, sociology, ancient and medieval history, child psychology, neurobiology, animal behavior, and a range of other specialties. For this alone it is a remarkable achievement, and one that may well be the touchstone of debates in half a dozen different disciplines over the next decade.

It is also a startling work, especially for a political scientist with Wilson's feel for the rhythms of public debate. Wilson himself noted, in a 1983 essay on "Crime and American Culture," that "science alone rarely shapes our conceptions of human psychology." But *The Moral Sense* probably comes closer than anything previously published by Wilson to being "science alone." It might be described as precisely an effort to "shape our conceptions of human psychology" by science alone.

Indeed, the discussion in *The Moral Sense* is pitched at such a high level of generality that it readily soars over the kinds of moral issues most bitterly disputed in contemporary American life. So, for example, while stressing the universality of family—as a "commitment" to "take responsibility for child care"—Wilson in his final pages notes that Americans "no longer agree on what constitutes a family," and mentions ongoing controversies over the status of homosexual couples, over cohabitation without marriage, and easy access to divorce. But he never pronounces directly on which of these issues needs to be resolved "to make possible the rearing of moral and healthy children."

So what is Wilson doing? He certainly cannot be accused of avoiding controversial subjects for fear of giving political offense. After all, he faced the explosive issue of racial disparities in crime rates in *Crime and Human Nature*, and he takes up the almost equally neuralgic question of gender differences both there and in *The Moral Sense* without flinching. He is not one to be easily bullied.

Still, Wilson has always displayed caution or discretion in choosing which controversies to enter. He has, for example, refrained from entering the lists on abortion, and while he has repeatedly argued for tougher sentencing and more assured punishment of criminals, he has never taken a forthright stand on capital punishment. Clearly, he does not feel compelled to wade into the middle of every fight, even those bordering directly on his own work.

THIS is a matter of personal taste or temperament, I think, as much as political tactic. Though frequently described as a conservative or neoconservative, Wilson does not have a combative temper or a sharply partisan edge. He reports, in a charming introduction to the essays in *On Character*, his experience at a 1980 conference on neoconservatism organized by the editors of *Partisan Review*: "Since I was not from New York, was not raised on the Left, took no part in its internecine war of words, and could not even give a passable definition of a Trotskyite, I had almost nothing to say of interest to the conferees."

In the end, however, this goes beyond temperament to something approaching a personal philosophy. Wilson often cites Aristotle in *The Moral Sense*, but the book's real premises derive explicitly from Adam Smith and Smith's mentor, David Hume, who traced moral judgment—as Wilson does—to "sentiments" rather than conclusions of reasoning. Hume was a firm supporter of individual liberty and constitutional government, who still scoffed at the notion that civil order could be founded on a social contract. He also attacked party ideologies in his *Essays* and, in his *History of England*, shuddered alike at the "superstition" of the Roman Church and the excessive "enthusiasm" of the Puritans.

Wilson is similarly bothered by dogmatism and "enthusiasm." "Embattled intellectuals," he says with evident distaste, "are dogmatic intellectuals." His writings on crime, though stressing the importance of punishment, do not offer expressions of deep indignation against criminals. In reading over Wilson's work, I am struck that the most openly censorious of all his writings may be the essay he produced about the thuggish behavior of radical students at Harvard and elsewhere in the late 1960's and early 70's: fanaticism

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horrifies him perhaps more than anything else.

Always—even in his recent writings on moral issues—Wilson expresses an underlying skepticism about the real motivating force of ideas (in the sense of ideological convictions). In *Bureaucracy*, he acknowledged the impact of policy fashions while still insisting that the ideological "beliefs" of bureaucrats are of limited importance in explaining their actions. He noted in a 1989 lecture that the "public philosophy" of "radical individualism" has been "institutionalized in the university" and is accordingly absorbed by the "millions of people who pass through those ivied halls"—but then he immediately offered a reassuring counterpoint: "Fortunately, for most of these people, their philosophy does not much affect their lives." In *The Moral Sense*, he takes issue with those conservatives who "argue that schools should impress upon their pupils moral maxims": this is "misguided" because "children do not learn morality by learning maxims. . . ."

Why write books, then, if opinion does not matter? And why write an elaborate book on "the moral sense" if it is ingrained in "human nature" anyway? Wilson's summary answer at the outset of *The Moral Sense* is: "We have a moral sense, most people instinctively rely on it even if intellectuals deny it, but it is not always and in every aspect of life strong enough to withstand a pervasive and sustained attack." In other words, "circumstances," how we arrange social incentives, can be crucial in affecting the operation of the moral sense. The trouble now is that "our intellectual culture has left ordinary citizens" bereft of moral guidance: "They wish to make moral judgments, but their culture does not help them do it. They often feel like refugees living in a land captured by hostile forces."

Rather than engaging in a polemical contest with those hostile forces, however, Wilson tries to sidestep them and simply gather up the evidence that ordinary notions of "right conduct" and "good character" really are rooted in deeply ingrained aspects of human nature and do seem essential to human life.

Hume wrote: "Parties from *principle*, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps the most extraordinary and unaccountable phenomenon, that has yet appeared in human affairs." Wilson seems to share this view, and *The Moral Sense* often appears to be arguing that moral order would naturally assert itself if people were left alone with their natural sentiments. If only the "intellectuals" would stop hounding "the ordinary citizen," we could return to necessary good sense about the minimal requisites of moral virtue. And Wilson seems to think that a great deal of evidence from scientific studies can provide this protection for the moral sense of "the ordinary citizen."

Indeed, in marshaling this evidence, his intention is in effect to turn the tables on the moral relativism which has historically gone hand-in-hand with the social sciences. Far from supporting the idea that there are no moral universals, the social sciences—so Wilson tries to demonstrate—actually prove the opposite.

IV

WILSON very nearly succeeds in this particular effort of demonstrating that social science confirms the existence of universals in human nature. But there are a number of problems with his larger project. Wilson is aware of them but tries to push them off to the margins or out of sight.

The first is in identifying the virtues or the elements of good character from among the many tendencies in human nature that do seem socially relevant. Wilson acknowledges that the sentiments he explores in *The Moral Sense*—again, they are sympathy, fairness, self-control, and duty—are not an exhaustive list. He notes that Aristotle in the *Ethics* discusses other virtues, such as courage, liberality, and magnanimity. He also concedes that he gives no sustained attention to sexual modesty, though, as he suggests in passing, some such sentiment seems to operate in all human cultures. Wilson himself does not note—though otherwise sympathetic reviewers have noted in dismay—that *The Moral Sense* fails to address sentiments like piety, awe, or reverence, which may also be found in almost all cultures and are necessary to sustain religion or any sort of spiritual awareness. Other candidates for inclusion in a natural moral sense might well be imagined.

As Wilson acknowledges, even among the narrow range of virtues he does consider there are numerous potentials for conflict. Our sympathy at the spectacle of suffering, even when the victims have brought misfortune on themselves, may overwhelm our sense of fairness or our sense of duty toward the standards they have violated. How do we resolve these conflicts? It is not very persuasive to suggest that they can be resolved simply by sentiment. It may be that most people most of the time resolve their ambivalence by resort to well-established cultural norms. But past a certain minimum, cultural norms are notoriously different from one society to the next.

This difficulty opens a more fundamental one. Wilson's emphasis on the basic moral sentiments seems compelling not only because it focuses on a short list of virtues but because it focuses on what might be regarded as the prerequisites for other virtues. One can argue, for example, that there cannot be courage or modesty without self-control, that there cannot be piety without a sense of duty. But even if some virtues are more basic than others, it does not follow that they are more important. And if one does

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think of basic virtues as prerequisites for other, higher virtues, then even the prerequisites cannot be fully understood without looking at the higher virtues which build upon them.

Wilson's presentation, by focusing so much on young children and primitive tribes (and sometimes even on sociability among animals), tends to obscure this problem by keeping the higher virtues out of view. But, after all, even sympathy and duty do not mean the same thing in an adult as in a child (much less in an animal).

A child who dutifully picks up his toys when he should does not display quite the same "virtue" as the soldier who holds to his post under enemy attack or the scientist who risks his career to expose a misuse of data, not least because the adult is more aware of the consequences of holding to duty. Focusing on the similarities between the adult virtue and the childish version not only slights the full force of the adult virtue but may even mislead us about why we so much approve the embryonic version we see in the child.

Insofar as it is an appeal for agreement on the basics, then, Wilson's argument is very much threatened by enduring *dis*agreements about the higher aims of social life. His argument is tantamount to an argument about education policy which urges that we put aside our disputes about the ultimate aims of higher education and acknowledge that, whatever children do later on, in elementary school they need to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. This has evident appeal. But even training in the basics may have a very different cast, depending on whether it is conceived as preparation for a pious life of Bible study or a life of aristocratic leisure or a life devoted to commercial enterprise.

In fact, we find it very difficult in contemporary America to maintain agreement even on elementary education, and that is surely because, while almost no one favors illiteracy, we disagree about the sort of life for which the schools should be preparing young children.

THE deepest problems with Wilson's presentation may emerge in thinking about how, as a practical matter, a decent moral consensus might be reestablished in contemporary America. Wilson himself acknowledges some of the difficulties, but does not draw out their full and troubling implications. Citizens who want to safeguard traditional moral restraints—in the interest of securing family life or stable communities—are shaken, as Wilson says in the preface, by countering slogans about individual freedom and equal respect. And it turns out that these slogans are not just the ethereal formulas of isolated intellectuals. Rather, by Wilson's own account, they reflect the ongoing ideological momentum of the Enlightenment and of the principles asserted by the American Founders.

Perhaps this conflict might be resolved by a better interpretation of America's principles than that which now prevails in universities, in law schools, and—much of the time—in the courts. Wilson notes that until recent decades, Americans assumed that democracy required "self-control" rather than "self-expression" and even educated elites joined in campaigns to inculcate moral restraint. But he has nowhere attempted a sustained demonstration that the earlier view was more consistent with the principles of the American Founding or more philosophically compelling.

One is bound to wonder, in fact, whether today's champions of radical egalitarian or individualist doctrines are not themselves in the grip of a moral passion of a headier sort—call it "compassion" rather than sympathy, or "justice" rather than fairness, or "conscience" rather than duty. If so, one must wonder whether such passion can be calmed by a demonstration that moral judgment simply rests on sentiment anyway.

Despite his efforts to suggest otherwise, Wilson is quite aware that the moral uncertainties in contemporary American society cannot really be attributed to a disjunction between the abstruse doctrines of visionary intellectuals and the natural, healthy sentiment of ordinary citizens. The country is divided over the proper view of abortion, out-of-wedlock parenting, homosexual conduct, recreational drug use, obscene art, social obligations to the poor, and a host of other issues. There is a mix of ideological rationales, of heartfelt sentiment, and intense passions on both sides of every such issue and on both sides of the larger division in outlook that colors opinions on these particular issues. Some conservatives have called it a "culture war." In fact, Wilson himself says in the preface to *The Moral Sense* that the country is experiencing "a cultural war, a war about values"; but the book does not pursue this thought.

Of course, it is not easy to say what we can do, as a society, once we acknowledge that we are in the midst of a "culture war." Appeals to biblical or religious authority, which may be decisive for some, will for others be ruled out of order from the outset. Some may have confidence that philosophic wisdom can point the true path, but it is harder to sustain confidence that democratic politics can wait for philosophic instruction. We might hope to learn from experience as the ideas of one side prevail and display their full consequences—but such lessons may come at calamitous cost.

It is clear, at any rate, that Wilson is not eager to wage open battle in a "culture war." In the mid-1960's, he wrote that while "morality is important . . . I fear for the time when politics is seized with the issue. Our system of government cannot handle matters of that sort (can any democratic system?) and it may be torn apart by the effort."

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Nothing in his more recent writings suggests any greater optimism on this score. In the early 1980's he declared: "We have made our society and we must live with it. If the [individualist] philosophy of Hobbes and Bentham governs . . . our definitions of policy, so be it; no one, least of all fundamentalist ministers, is going to change that."

Wilson's hope now seems to be, not that the defenders of moral restraint will mobilize for a larger impact on society, but that the "intellectuals" or the advocates of greater equality and personal autonomy will back off from pressing their doctrines to "perverse" extremes.

V

"A SCHOLAR and a gentleman"—there was once a time when the compliment could be offered without irony. Today there are not many academics to whom that phrase still applies and perhaps fewer still who would be entirely comfortable at receiving it. James Q. Wilson is one of the few.

Some two decades after completing his doctoral dissertation, at a stage when most academics are content simply to dispense opinions, Wilson embarked on an extensive series of interviews with FBI agents and drug-enforcement officers for his careful, empirical study, *The Investigators*. That is a scholar. After a quarter-century of experience advising Presidents and cabinet officers, Wilson's book, *Bureaucracy*, begins with a disclaimer: "I dislike the kiss-and-tell memoirs that have recently become so popular—and so profitable. Many of them dishonor the public trust with which their authors were once endowed." That is a gentleman.

Plainly, it is Wilson's dedication as a scholar that accounts for the impressive range and detail of the arguments in *The Moral Sense*. It is a book that would be a crowning achievement for a psychologist or an anthropologist. For a political scientist, sifting through immense masses of material in other disciplines, it is altogether stunning. Something of Wilson's temperament as a gentleman may also be reflected in the hesitations and indirections of *The Moral Sense*. Disdaining passionate advocacy or heated rhetoric, he retains the belief that a cogent presentation of evidence can change opinions. Not everyone's, of course, but the opinions of some, and this can make a difference.

Others may wonder whether a "war about values" can be decisively affected by particular works of scholarship—or by gentlemen. But Wilson's writings about crime (where, for the first time, he relied extensively upon statistical studies by others, as he does in *The Moral Sense*) did, in fact, have a large impact on the crime debate. So if Wilson thinks *The Moral Sense* can moderate the belligerents, one must take his view very seriously. He is, after all, one of the most insightful students of American politics now living.

In the last line of his new book, Wilson says that the moral sense is a "small candle flame" which "dispels the darkness and warms the soul." It may not be Wilson's ambition to light bonfires, but he has certainly dispelled his share of darkness. *The Moral Sense* is a landmark achievement that may yet warm some souls. And in an angry era, it may even cool some fevers.

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Culture Shocks

A Story

Vladimir Matlin

THE people from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS, as everyone called it) and the interpreter Katie, known also as Katya, drove us straight to the motel from the Los Angeles airport. We were given money, groceries, and other odds and ends to tide us over. Among the groceries was some Ivory soap, the smell of which still reminds me of my first days in America. The HIAS people and Katie/Katya did not stay long, and it was then that *they* arrived.

Lyuba came in first. She opened the door a crack and asked in her singsong voice, "I beg your pardon, is this where the Russians are living?" Sam peered out from behind her back. They came into the room the same way: Lyuba, tall and corpulent, with smooth gray hair, in front, and behind her Sam, dry and bald, in huge glasses that somehow managed not to fall from his sharp nose. Lyuba immediately began to take inventory of the groceries that HIAS had left for us, offering her criticisms, while Sam pinned me against the wall and burst forth in a rapid and incomprehensible stream of words.

This language of Sam's is worth special mention. It was an appalling mix of English and Yiddish with a few Polish and Ukrainian words thrown in which he apparently believed to be Russian. Later, much later, I was to find out that he was perfectly capable of speaking English properly but butchered the language on purpose because he thought it would be easier for me to understand. It never occurred to him that I didn't know a word of either Polish, Ukrainian, or Yiddish. He talked a great deal, and always in an excited monologue, clearly never intending a response from me. I would listen, but understood very little. He was forever talking about the same things: working conditions, the workers' demands, strikes, negotiations, collective bargaining, and all the rest of it. Let me try to reproduce a sample:

"The very next day, boss I tell you about, *sogt* me, in bully tone, *arbeiters* only enter factory! I think first he *bardzo* joking very much. . . ."

And on and on. It was tough to sit through. His wife Lyuba was just the opposite: she had kept her Russian pure, with almost no accent, though her vocabulary was somewhat limited. All the useful information came from her. She explained things, like which stores we should shop at, which ones were overpriced, what was the best way to get downtown, how to address an envelope—not at all the way we were used to doing it.

For the most part, it was the little things that came as the biggest surprise. When the HIAS people would start to explain freedom of speech or equal rights, it was often boring and unpleasant, since we knew as much about these things as they did. But it never occurred to anyone to tell us that envelopes weren't sold at the post office, as we were used to, but in supermarkets and drugstores. Or that street signs in American cities were not on the sides of buildings but on signposts at the edge of the sidewalk so they could be seen from passing cars. I remember how, on my way to my first job interview, I rushed up and down in complete despair, trying to find the name of the street.

I located a job immediately, although at the time—the mid-70's—unemployment was rising steadily and everyone was worried that we had arrived in such hard times. I was probably ideally suited to work in a warehouse: you didn't need to know anything, understand anything, or say anything, you just had to sort the parts into three groups, and then place each group in a separate box. They paid minimum wage, which in those days, if I'm not mistaken, was around two dollars an hour.

A fat Mexican woman did the same job on my right, and on my left was a tall and extraordinarily handsome black man of about forty-five. He worked with his head lowered, never raising his eyes or talking to anyone. I think he was ashamed to be doing the same work as immigrants who did not speak English. Soon after I started there, he just stopped coming to work. With the help of gestures and three or four words, the fat Mexican woman explained to me that he had been killed.

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How, why, under what circumstances remained a mystery.

MY JOB had another advantage: from the apartment that HIAS had provided, I could get to work without having to change buses. Naturally, we did not yet have a car. I say "yet," because even though we were working for the minimum wage and living in complete poverty (by American standards), we were somehow confident that sooner or later all this would change, and so we would study different models of cars.

This horrified our new friends. "Give up your foolish dreams," Lyuba admonished us. "Take a good sober look at life. Who here cares about your diplomas, your knowledge, your published books, your talents, and everything you tell us about, true though it may be? Can't you see what's going on around you?"

And to listen to Lyuba tell it, horrible things were indeed going on. The unemployment level rose continuously, prices kept going up while wages stayed almost the same. Many people, especially retirees like Lyuba and Sam, couldn't make ends meet.

It wasn't that Kira and I didn't believe them, but we simply couldn't grasp how this could be. How could all the countless stores survive if there was such widespread poverty and need? Who was packing the restaurants every night? And who was behind the wheels of all those automobiles that flowed in a continuous stream down the wide streets of the city? It was useless to question Lyuba, and we didn't want to offend her with our doubts, especially since they, Lyuba and Sam, did actually live very modestly, as we could see by their apartment, by their clothes, and by their complaints about how everything was unaffordable.

Lyuba's advice was remarkably practical and we valued it dearly, or at least we valued it at first, until we gained some personal experience of our own.

Our first major disagreement occurred when HIAS offered to enroll my wife in a real-estate course.

"Under no circumstances!" said Lyuba, worried. "Are you kidding? Who's buying houses right now? With prices where they are? With wages where they are? With interest rates where they are?"

"Then what are they . . . these . . . real estates . . . what are they teaching us for?" Kira asked. She was quite taken with her future profession.

Lyuba sneered indignantly, "It's clear why: to exploit you! You need to learn some normal profession—a cook, say, or a job in a hospital. . . ."

I wanted to ask how they were going to exploit Kira if no one was buying houses or apartments anyway, but I caught her glance and kept silent. Kira didn't say anything either, but went to her first class the next morning.

Despite this and all sorts of similar disagreements, Kira and I felt a genuine liking for them, and saw them often in the evenings and on weekends. They enjoyed spending time with us; they seemed to be proud of us. Once Lyuba invited us to "meet with our people." We didn't ask who "our people" might be, and weren't even tipped off by Lyuba's strange request that Kira refrain from wearing her jeweled ring, which was, incidentally, the only valuable object we had managed to get through Soviet customs using various truths and untruths (mostly untruths). We just thought that we were probably going to some "bad neighborhood."

But the meeting took place in a fine part of town, a cozy square next to the Fine Arts museum. For some unclear reason, aesthetic or perhaps educational, the city fathers had erected a gigantic, life-size dinosaur in the center of the square. There it stood, covered in bony armor, with a tiny head on its long neck, and raging eyes. This fossilized monster served as the background for our meeting.

"OUR people" turned out to be two or three dozen old men in hats and old women in tight-fitting polyester pants. Many of them could speak Russian but among themselves spoke in Yiddish, which, if you listened carefully, actually turned out to be English. Later we learned that they gathered there every Saturday morning. Maybe it was an unconscious substitute for their childhood habit of going to the synagogue—now, at any rate, they were all high-minded atheists, internationalists, and fighters for the liberation of the oppressed masses.

They were very interested in us, or, rather, in the country from which we came. They asked countless questions; after all, this was still at the beginning of the Russian immigration and in their eyes we were messengers from another world. We answered them in detail and as accurately as possible, interrupting each other and adding comments like A-students. But we gradually began to notice that our questioners were growing more and more skeptical and were clearly no longer believing what we said.

In the end, an old man in a Tyrolean hat with a feather said, "I'm very sorry, but your numbers just don't add up. You say that the average salary of a country doctor is 120 rubles a month, and a pair of women's boots, you say, is more than 100 rubles. But how can that be the case? That means that if a doctor buys his wife a pair of boots, then they can't eat for a whole month!"

The old man began to laugh, and all the other old men and old women began to laugh too. I looked at Kira in dismay, and she at me, but we couldn't explain anything to them even though it was the truth. Really, how could it be the case?

The laughter was interrupted by a tall woman sitting on the bench next to me, who until that

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moment had not said a word. When she began to speak, the rest immediately fell silent.

"There are all kinds of people," she began, "and they leave their country for different reasons. Most of us left at the beginning of the Revolution because of the pogroms. You know what went on in the Ukraine at that time? Denikinists, Petlurovists, Makhnovists—they all killed Jews. Now it seems they're no longer killing Jews, but I'm not asking you why you left. You had your reasons, I'm sure. You're welcome here and we wish you luck. But the truth is the truth! For some reason things were bad for you there. Let's say that was the case. And a doctor probably does earn less over there than he might here—that's also understandable. But for the simple people, which means most of us, life there is better than it is here—that's the point! Just imagine," she continued, now addressing all the old people, "a country where there is no unemployment, where the government is concerned with making sure that everyone has a job! A country with free higher education, free medical care, and the rent is purely symbolic. Of course they don't have any homeless people. . . ."

In response, the old people moaned sweetly, imagining what it would be like for Americans, with their salaries and pensions, to receive free schooling and medical care, and pay a purely symbolic rent for their apartments, townhouses, and country homes.

Kira and I tried to explain what things were really like over there, but our "numbers just didn't add up," and what we were telling them could not be true, because "you can't live like that, people don't live that way."

I understood then that it was impossible to explain the "whole truth" about our past life to people who hadn't been there. They just could not comprehend such absurdity. There was no way to give a single conclusive and thorough answer to the question: why did you leave? Any response turned out to be fundamentally incomplete and, as a result, sounded unconvincing or even false.

Once, we had the chance to answer that question in writing. We were in Rome, on our way to the States. At that time, all the emigrants grew terribly worried and began to consult one another. In my opinion, the best answer was proposed by a certain bookkeeper from Bobruysk (he called himself a "counting worker"), who wrote in the questionnaire: "Left in connection with the opportunity having presented itself."

But there in that square, with the dinosaur in the background, under cross-examination by these old people, we were much less resourceful than the accountant from Bobruysk, that hick town. All told, the meeting left an unpleasant taste in our mouths—"the meeting with the dinosaur," as we called it later.

I remember that on the way home we rebelled, refusing to ride the bus. We took a taxi instead. But no matter how hard we tried to persuade them, Lyuba and Sam refused on principle to get into a taxi.

"I shouldn't have left the ring behind," Kira said when we got home. "That way they would have immediately recognized a class enemy and wouldn't have wasted their time asking questions."

She was visibly upset.

KIRA was often depressed during that period of our lives. She was having great difficulties with her real-estate course. Her English was still poor, but the problem was less the language than the realities of American life. It was all the things her classmates in the real-estate course, who had been born here, knew from childhood, but that no one bothered to explain to her: all that business about loans, mortgages, and discount rates, which were for her a mysterious world beyond the looking-glass.

Kira made a superhuman effort to figure them out at home after class. I couldn't offer her any help in this, but the person who truly came to her rescue was Lyuba. Although Lyuba had never owned property, she understood the basics of mortgages and could explain them in Russian. Apparently, just by living in this country, even without buying a house, it was impossible not to know at least something about bank loans, just as by living in our old country, even if you weren't a Communist, it was impossible not to know, for example, what a district committee was.

Still, although Lyuba did help, Kira continued to have a hard time with her studies. Her stress was accumulating, showing itself now in depression, now in irritability, now in insomnia. And then there was that one time I'll never forget.

It was late at night, we were sitting at the dining-room table, working. Kira was trying to understand what a variable discount rate was, and I was trying to write about something from our past life. We didn't have a desk yet; the dining-room table had been given to us by HIAS. Suddenly I heard a hoarse whistle. I looked up and saw Kira's contorted face. She had put her head down on the table, her forehead was covered in sweat, and she was having trouble breathing. I called out in horror, rushed over, and started to shake her. I got her to drink a glass of water, but nothing seemed to help, her breathing was becoming irregular. I ran to the telephone, grabbed the receiver and froze in my tracks. Suddenly I realized that I didn't know what to do. What number should I call? How did you say "ambulance" in English?

I can state with confidence that as long as I live I will never forget that brief moment. With what can I compare that feeling of total helplessness? Probably to the state of a newborn baby as he comes into the world, defenseless, without language, without the most elementary skills. But at

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least a baby doesn't understand what's happening to him. . . .

I recall this scene particularly often now, when everything has changed and our relatives from Russia come to visit in an unending stream to learn whether they can find a place for themselves in America. "Well, be honest, was it tough at first?" they ask, expecting an encouraging answer. But I keep silent. I'm thinking not about my work at the warehouse or about life without a desk or a car, but about that episode, which I don't want to discuss with them. I feel that if I *could* ever describe the depths of my despair and humiliation, then immigration would cease for good, at least where my relatives were concerned.

Of course, at that moment, I wasn't thinking about my sufferings, I had to help my dying wife—yes, that's how it looked to me then, believe me! And the only thing I could think of doing was to call Lyuba.

She was asleep, I woke her up, and she understood everything immediately.

"Don't lose your head," she said. "Get a hold of yourself. What is she doing at the table? Put her on the couch with a pillow under her head. Undo her bra. Run downstairs and unlock the outside door, I'll call the ambulance."

"The what?" I asked.

"The ambulance. What do you call it in Russian? Um, first aid."

Kira came back from the hospital the next day. It wasn't anything serious. She had had an attack of nerves due to her exhausted condition. She had to rest.

The next morning, she went off to class.

I REMEMBER those first months in America as something unreal; only the smell of Ivory soap proves that it wasn't all a dream. After all, a smell cannot be invented. The strange feeling of not really living but rather observing life from a distance never left me, as if I were watching a movie and trying to guess what sort of ending the screenwriter would come up with.

I continued to sort parts at the warehouse, except that now I was getting $2.40 an hour. At the same time, I kept on sending out résumés to dozens of companies. I realized that no one would hire me for a science-related job, so I aimed for a position in manufacturing instead. Almost every application came back with a long-winded, sickeningly polite, and falsely sympathetic answer: We are astonished by your qualifications, your knowledge, and your experience, but unfortunately we have no need for specialists of your type at the present time. Should we require such specialists in the future, we will gladly get in touch with you.

I didn't throw these letters out—probably out of pedantry. They came in handy when, exactly a year later, I began to receive invitations to be interviewed by the same firms that had written me those polite rejections. The most surprising thing was that they really hadn't been lying, at least most of them hadn't. They really had held onto my documents, probably waiting until I had adjusted to life in America.

Meanwhile, life went on. We made new American friends. Kira made a friend in her class, a talkative woman our age whose name was Jill. She called herself an immigrant, too, since she had moved to Los Angeles from Texas, where she had had a falling-out with her family. Conversations with Jill broadened our English vocabulary considerably.

In addition, we had become friends with Katie/Katya, the interpreter from HIAS, and this friendship had a practical result: Katya volunteered to translate my manuscripts into English. And Lyuba and Sam, with their parental attitude toward us, continued to be first among our friends. But our disagreements continued—more and more frequently over trivial matters—and were remembered and stored away. And this is how our friendship ended.

I've mentioned my "writings." I don't know quite how to define them: reminiscences, I suppose. Or, more precisely, descriptions of the state of things in the field of science I had worked in before, but subjective descriptions, written, as the writing crowd says, "through myself." I sent excerpts from Katya's translations to various journals at her recommendation, and—can you imagine?—a reputable nonscientific journal became interested in one of the articles. What's more, they published it.

I can still see myself running home with the journal in my hands. Of course, it didn't solve any of our problems, but being published was something symbolic: our first success in America! We felt very fortunate.

Several days later, I extracted from the mailbox an elegant envelope with a check from the journal for—well, it doesn't matter how much, and I don't remember exactly.

Naturally, my first impulse was to bring the check to Kira. But then I got an idea. I wanted to surprise her with some sort of present. Hadn't she earned one? I began to think about what to give her, since the check was not a piddling amount, and then I hit on something. Soviet customs had not allowed us to take Kira's fur coat, the one her mother had given her. She had been chagrined at the time: would she ever again have such a coat? That's the ticket, I thought: I'll get her a new fur coat. Don't be afraid, Kira, we shall triumph!

Naturally, I couldn't buy anything too fancy. Coats made out of really nice fur cost much more than what I had. But what did I need a full-length coat for? The salesman explained quite logically that it would make more sense to buy a jacket. First of all, the climate here was not that severe, and even in winter it was quite warm. And second, a jacket was much more comfort-

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able, especially in a car. "You don't have a car? You will!"

I had just enough for the jacket. And the name of the fur was too much: blue fox. Later I found out that it actually meant polar fox. That was also quite beautiful. . . .

And there was Kira, all pink with joy, standing in silvery fur before the mirror in our entryway. She laughed and laughed and kept repeating, "You've really gone crazy, no doubt about it!"

"Do you like it?" I kept trying to get an answer.

But she just laughed and repeated, "You've really gone crazy, no doubt about it!"

There was a knock at the door, and Lyuba and Sam came in.

NATURALLY, they were surprised.

"What is that?" Lyuba asked in a distant voice.

"It's a blue fox," I answered, as calmly as possible. And I quickly explained how it had all happened.

"He's gone crazy," Kira added.

"Wait a minute," Lyuba said, sitting down on a chair. "You mean to say that you bought this with the money you got for the article?"

I nodded, still not understanding what she was getting at. She looked at Kira in surprise, then at Sam, but he was staring at the jacket as if the fox were alive.

There was an unpleasant pause.

"What's the matter?"

Lyuba shrugged her shoulders sorrowfully. "Don't you see, a fur jacket is a wonderful thing, and why not get yourself one, if you have the money to spare? But do you have money to *spare*? The Jewish organizations are still helping you, isn't that right?"

"HIAS pays for my classes," Kira admitted.

"Exactly," Lyuba looked at Sam again. "What does that mean? They gave you money for living expenses, now they're giving you money for school, and you're buying furs. . . . What do you have to say about this, Sam?"

As if regaining consciousness from the shock, he shook his head so violently that his glasses almost fell off. "It's not nice! Not right!"

"What, do you mean we're not allowed to keep track of our own money?" I asked.

This obviously ticked Lyuba off. "You know, if it comes to that," she said, "let's get it all out on the table. Where do you think the Jewish organizations get this money? The money for your studies, for your apartment, to have your belongings shipped, for your first days in a motel? . . . Where do they get it from? From us, from people like us, from our donations. Do you understand? I don't want to reproach you, God forbid, but we're not rich people, we're not at all rich. We deny ourselves many things, but we give to social causes. And what happens? We can't afford things like this, but you can. Is that fair?"

"Well this is kind of like a loan," Kira said in an attempt at conciliation. "When we start earning money, we'll make donations to HIAS, too. But meanwhile . . . I want it so much!"

"And you think *I* don't want it so much?" Lyuba lashed out with unexpected fervor. "Don't you think I was young once? I spent my whole life in poverty, my whole life just scraping by. And even now, I certainly wouldn't turn one down! But I can't, I can't allow myself *things like that*. If we manage to save a dollar, we donate it to people like you. . . ."

This struck me as offensive. Of course, I should have controlled myself, I regretted it later, but I couldn't help it. I said some foolish things, called them losers and Communists. I said that their place was where medical care was free and the government found your jobs for you. "Even in America," I said, "the two of you can't do anything but go on about the proletariat of the world. . . ."

"Enough!" Sam yelled suddenly. "Enough! We're leaving right now!"

I never suspected that he had such reserves of energy. He dashed up to his wife, grabbed her by the hand, and dragged her toward the door.

"I'm very sorry," Lyuba barely had time to mumble.

When the downstairs door slammed, Kira began to cry.

WE WERE extremely upset over this quarrel. We talked about it often, going over all the details, remembering who said what. Kira reproached me and insisted that I call up and apologize. I replied that it would be better if she called since they would be less put out with her. She said, "You were so rude, you go ahead and apologize." But I still couldn't force myself to do it. And it wasn't just out of pride. I felt I had to do something more than just ask their forgiveness for my harsh words, I had to make some practical gesture as well, like returning the purchase to the store or temporarily declining the money from HIAS—to admit by my actions that they had been right. And I didn't want to do that.

So our relations were severed completely. But I had occasion to see Sam one more time.

It happened about a year after the blue-fox incident. At that time, I was already working in a research laboratory. This was my first job in America in my profession. We were very glad the job was in Los Angeles and we didn't have to move somewhere else. We had somehow grown accustomed to this city, which to tourists seems so faceless. We already called it "our town." Things began to work out for Kira, too: she developed her own clients, sold her first two houses, and her friend Jill, the "immigrant" from Texas, became manager of the agency.

Our English improved dramatically and our circle of friends widened, both through work and

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through HIAS, where we had come to feel at home by helping to settle new immigrants. Kira was already talking about getting our own house, although we decided not to rush into this since, for the time being anyway, we were renting an apartment in a very nice high-rise. Admittedly, it did have one shortcoming—the parking lot was inconveniently located.

This has a bearing on my story, since that evening I had parked my Ford on the street, near the entrance, and dashed to the building through the rain, bounding over the puddles. Right at the entrance I almost ran into a man standing quietly by the door. He raised his umbrella slightly, and I recognized Sam.

I was dumbfounded. But he looked *expectant*, even smiling slightly. That half-smile brightened my spirits.

"Sam! What brings you to these parts?"

"I want to talk to you," he said simply.

"Of course! I want to talk to you too; come on in, Kira will be delighted. This is where we live, in this building."

"Thank you, I know, but I can't come in. Let's talk somewhere else."

We sat on a couch in the lobby. I examined Sam closely, as if meeting him for the first time. His outward appearance probably hadn't changed: I had just never seen him so focused.

"Sam, it's so good that we met. I've wanted to call you and Lyuba so many times. I really regret having—well, you know what. I offended both of you, and I'm ashamed. Especially since you did so much for us. . . ."

"It's OK," he interrupted me. "After all, we were friends, and arguments happen even between friends. That's not the point."

I suddenly noticed that he was speaking perfect English, without a trace of Yiddish or Polish thrown in.

He thought for a moment and repeated:

"That's not the point. And you have nothing to be sorry for: you were right."

This was so unexpected that I couldn't respond right away.

"I'm not apologizing for the fur jacket, but for speaking to you both so rudely."

"You have nothing to be sorry for, what you said was true," he said, a note of persistence in his voice. "I've understood that for a long time . . . about losers. But everything is much more complicated than that. A loser is not just an unlucky person, it's an entire *type* of person. In the end, these people make up an entire layer of society. Or a class, to use terminology we're both familiar with. What can I tell you? I've lived a long life, and I've seen many lives pass before my eyes, including the lives of immigrants. And everything that I've come to understand can be expressed in five words: some can and some can't. That's all of socioeconomics for you. I saw how people who came with us on the same ship got on their feet. . . . If I told you, you wouldn't believe me. And others couldn't and never will. Lyuba and I, for example. . . . We tried, but nothing worked out. And that's not our fault. You must understand, people are not to blame for anything. They have a right to a decent life, without exception. They need protection and support. Do you remember our friends, over there by the dinosaur? They'd sooner die than believe you. After all, you're killing their biggest hope. But why shouldn't you be believed when you're telling the truth? . . ."

He fell silent and examined the artificial tree in the ceramic flowerpot with intense concentration.

"And that's it, strictly speaking," he said after a long pause. "Give my best to Kira."

"Wait. I still don't understand why you won't come in, since we already happened to meet here."

"Happened to meet?" he smiled. "I've been here on the street waiting for you for days, but, as luck would have it, you keep parking your car in the garage. And there's no point coming in. You're independent now. Everything is turning out well for both of you. Lyuba and I are both very happy for you. You don't need our help now, and what's more. . . . You don't understand, we're much too different."

"Well, so what? We may be different, but we can still have a great time together. You have certain notions about life, we have others. That doesn't bother me a bit." I was being sincere.

"Maybe it doesn't bother you, but it bothers me. After all, in my whole life I never did give my wife a fur coat. . . ."

He began laughing and shook his head. He leaned on his umbrella, got up from the couch and headed toward the exit. I stared at his gaunt back, bald skull, and protruding ears. Suddenly I felt that I was losing something very dear, something that I would possibly never have again.

"Sam! Stop!" I ran after him. "Stop! I'll give you a ride home!"

He waved with his free hand. "Don't even think of it! You're tired after work and it's a long drive. There's a bus stop nearby."

No matter how I tried to convince him, he wouldn't hear of it. Walking out the door, he said unexpectedly, "You're smart to buy an American car. That supports our automakers."

"Maybe we could go somewhere some weekend?" I felt terrible and said the first thing that popped into my head. "Ask Lyuba. Maybe that square downtown, the one with the dinosaur? We'll have a chat with your friends, eh?"

He didn't answer. Opening the umbrella he trudged off to the bus stop, carefully avoiding the puddles.

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My Jewish Roots

David Klinghoffer

I BROACHED the subject the way it is always smart to broach delicate subjects with one's father: as if the news I had to impart were merely a chance event, no big deal.

A week earlier, I had spoken, for the first time in my twenty-seven years, to Harriet Lund, the woman from whom I was adopted by my parents as an infant. I had not told my father in advance I was planning to do this, so the information had to be offered in such a way as to minimize its importance.

I called from my office—he lives in California—and we spoke about this and that: his upcoming trip to Mexico, the air conditioner I had bought. Then I said, "By the way, Dad, I talked to Harriet Lund the other day." I got the reaction I had hoped for: surprise, interest, nothing more.

My father had told me Harriet's name a few years back, when, over brunch, I had—again very casually—posed the question, "By the way, Dad, what do you know about my birth parents?" My mother, who I always felt was sensitive on the subject, had died seven years earlier; so the time seemed right to make the inquiry. With equal nonchalance, my father revealed all he knew about the woman who had given birth to me. Swedish-born, she had been twenty-four years old at the time, an unmarried social worker living in Santa Monica. He and my mother had met Harriet twice for lunch at a Hamburger Hamlet restaurant in West Los Angeles.

Though this was not how I would have put it at the time, the facts about Harriet confirmed a vague impression I had long carried with me. Most people grow up feeling that their "background"—composed of family, nationality, religion—is the only possible soil from which the body they inhabit could have sprouted. I, by contrast, had always felt that my own background was the result of chance events, a coincidence that might or might not have produced the person I am today.

Thanks to my father, I now knew for certain that Harriet Lund, a Gentile and a Swede, was nothing like him and my mother—Jews from New York, respectively a dentist and a speech therapist, who had migrated to Los Angeles in the early 50's and had been introduced to Harriet by a Beverly Hills lawyer specializing in adoption. These threads of biography drove home the unsettling feeling that, far from being a product of either fate or intentions, my identity had been determined by the blindest, dumbest of luck. What is more, the dice had been tossed by a lawyer, who took a fee for the service.

FOR me, growing up as an adopted child had meant that everything about me—especially the fact that I was a Jew—seemed a kind of pose. Since it was not pleasant to think of myself as a poseur, I had tried over the years to find some bedrock for the elements of my identity. Among other steps, I had converted to Judaism.

According to Jewish law, a child is considered a Jew only if his biological mother is a Jew. Being Reform Jews, my parents had not accepted this view, and neither had I—until my sophomore year in high school. One day, on an impulse, I called a Lubavitcher rabbi whose name I had found in a phone book. He told me that, without a doubt, I was not a Jew. To convert, I would need to be immersed in a ritual bath and undergo a symbolic circumcision. The latter procedure, which consists of having a drop of blood drawn by a specially-trained *mohel*, must be witnessed by a Jewish court. I would also need to study Judaism intensively, as no one did at our Reform temple, and convince my parents to make our kitchen kosher.

Needless to say, I was put off by this conversation. I did, however, take my grandfather's prayerbook and a razor blade into the bathroom. Having washed the blade in some hot soapy water, and fighting off squeamishness, I drew a drop of blood from the specified place. I then took a quick dip in the bath, in a most unorthodox self-conversion.

I was now a Jew—or was I? Years later, having graduated from college and being still pursued by doubts, I sought out a Conservative rabbi. He told me that, owing to my obvious sincerity, he would agree to convert me in a traditional ceremony. This was done. But two years later I learned that Orthodox rabbis do not trust the *halakhic* (legal) credentials of Conservative rabbis, and so regard conversions performed by them as invalid. Finally, I sat down to study Judaism in a systematic way, reached the settled conclusion that its claims were true, and a year later was converted under Orthodox supervision. Having undergone no fewer than four circumcisions—a record, surely—I was kosher at last.

Or was I? With Harriet and (I later learned) a Kansas Wasp named George for my progenitors, I do not look Jewish. Moreover, unlike many of the other young Orthodox single people on the Upper West Side of New York, where I now live, I received a strict-

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ly secular education, and so lack the social connections of school and camp which they take so easily for granted. In kosher restaurants I often feel the glances of curious strangers, or think I do.

SOMETIMES, however, fate is not so arbitrary as it seems. From the day I decided to find her, it took me three weeks and perhaps a hundred phone calls to track down Harriet Lund, on a trail that led from Los Angeles, to Stockholm, back to Los Angeles, to Fresno, and finally to El Cajon, a suburb of San Diego. As I joked to friends about my telephone detective work, never before had I heard such an uninterrupted string of Gentile voices.

She had, she told me, been hoping I would come looking for her some day, and our first conversation was filled with equal measures of delight, apprehension, and surprise. It turned out that my father's account of Harriet and her boyfriend of the time had been imperfect on several points. Harriet was twenty-seven at my conception—my present age exactly—while the George who made it all possible was several years older. They had been supervisors at an agency in Los Angeles providing job training to the mentally retarded. Furthermore, it was Harriet, not the lawyer, who had chosen the couple who would be my parents.

Her priority, she told me now, had been to find a pair of middle-class Jewish professionals. She had considered other couples who did not meet these criteria, and duly rejected them. One potential adoptive father had been Alan Cranston, then the state controller of California, later a U.S. Senator; his disgrace in the Keating Five scandal many years later was an event Harriet followed with great interest, and relief. Another possibility had been Herb Alpert, leader of the Tijuana Brass Band and future founder of Arista Records.

But why Jews? Reared in progressive Sweden, Harriet had been baptized a Lutheran but as an adult never pledged herself to a particular church. Her motivation was a-religious. "In Sweden the Jews have a good name," Harriet told me. "It's sort of a status thing." This may be hard to accept, but Harriet believed it. Perhaps more important in her mind was this: she was herself partly of Jewish background. Her mother's maiden name had been Goldkuhl.

I listened in fascinated silence as Harriet recounted her family story. German Jews who had moved to Stockholm in the 19th century, the Goldkuhls became prosperous and assimilated, and through intermarriage gradually disappeared. The father of Harriet's mother—biologically speaking, my great-grandfather, now long dead—had been among the last Jewish members of the family. He married a Gentile woman, and their descendants, including Harriet's mother and Harriet, were therefore, by Jewish law, Gentiles.

Perhaps their disappearance as Jews would have bothered the Goldkuhls, but somehow I doubt it. Many German Jews of that period longed for and some even represented a culture equal in its genteel secularism to that of the most genteel, secularized American Jews of our own day. Anti-parochial, universalistic Reform Judaism was, after all, invented in Germany. It is amusing to imagine the appalled reaction of those old Goldkuhls, beyond the grave, to the news that their blonde-haired, blue-eyed great-great-granddaughter, a full-fledged Swede, had given birth to a son in America who would grow up to embrace Judaism in all its parochial particularism, even going so far as to have himself converted no fewer than three times.

My parents, of course, are likewise the descendants of families that, with each generation, had edged a step closer to secularism. When I informed my father that I had converted to Judaism he reacted with the same good-natured nonchalance I encountered a few years later when I told him I had spoken to Harriet.

The delicious irony of it all makes it difficult for me to accept any longer my old assumptions about dumb, blind, arbitrary luck. There is a narrative line, I now think, in the events of a person's life. At least there is in mine. The progression, like a trip route traced on a faded road map, is there to be found. Of course, sometimes you have to make a few phone calls.

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Much Ado About Branagh

Richard Ryan

When in 1990 Kenneth Branagh's luminous film version of Shakespeare's *Henry V* appeared like a comet, it seemed an augury of great things. The young and charismatic British star and director was compared with Laurence Olivier and Orson Welles; he was thought capable of rescuing, single-handedly, the great tradition of Shakespearean cinema, a legacy left critically anemic by three decades of Franco Zefirelli's bloodletting. Although Branagh followed his debut with a pair of lightweight and inconsequential films, no one seemed to mind. Now, with this summer's *Much Ado About Nothing*, he is said to have triumphed again. If only that were true. . . .

The critical hyperbole which has greeted this effort is utterly astonishing. One is perhaps inured to lack of restraint in the *New York Times*'s Vincent Canby—"a ravishing entertainment," he called Branagh's movie—but even less flappable reviewers lost their heads. Stanley Kauffmann, for example, was so enraptured that he reviewed the movie *twice* for the *New Republic*, in notices filled with gush. Emma Thompson, Branagh's wife and co-star, Kaufmann wrote, is "the first screen actress since Katharine Hepburn to make intelligence sexy"; or, again, "Branagh's astonishing energy . . . makes him the Atlas on whom this world rests"; or, finally, "one doesn't often cry for pleasure at a film. It happened here." In *New York* magazine, David Denby, too, envisioned audiences weeping with joy.

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Clearly these are critics famished (and who is not?) for real culture on the screen. But we do the muses no favors by inflating the mediocre and the merely popular, which are the categories into which Branagh's *Much Ado* falls. Branagh has himself freely confessed his belief in "popular entertainment." Explaining his project in a laudatory *New York* magazine cover story, he remarked:

> *Much Ado* means that for a whole generation of kids, some grateful teacher, with a gasp of relief, will be able to say, "Here are girls with cleavages and boys with tight trousers, class. You will now shut up for an hour and a half and pay attention!"

With this Branagh has issued his own indictment: the popularizing on display in *Much Ado* is the sort that insults the populace.

One of the mysteries of Branagh's film is why he chose to produce this particular play. Like every early entry in the Shakespearian *oeuvre*, *Much Ado* has passages of wonderfully executed drama, and contains devices and themes which will emerge more convincingly in the later plays. But as an aesthetic whole, *Much Ado* is less than completely satisfying. The narrative construction is flawed, several key characters are under-realized, and the play lacks the sense of culminating momentum which is so characteristic of Shakespeare's greatest works.

Still, even with its flaws, a director who calls on the text's softer voices—and especially on its darker side—can elicit a work of intriguing complexity. Branagh, however, does little more than cast one or two suggestive glances in the direction of the play's higher nature. In his high-camp retelling, what is solemn, lovely, and deep in the original text has largely been obscured, if not altogether excluded. Branagh, in fact, has drastically edited and reworked the comedy—not to disguise its structural flaws but to make it palatable to his imagined "generation of kids." Although he has avowed that he wants to give us "an uncluttered Shakespeare," what this movie is remarkably uncluttered by is things Shakespearean.

Much Ado, as it happens, is one of Shakespeare's most formulaic works. Based on a story of love deceived and then restored which dates back to ancient times, the comedy presents two lovers: Claudio, a young soldier, and Hero, the daughter of the duke of Messina. Claudio and Hero plan to marry with the approval of Hero's father, Leonato, and Claudio's lord, Don Pedro. Yet Don Pedro's bastard brother, John, for no reason other than malice, decides to spoil the wedding. John tricks Claudio into thinking Hero is unfaithful to him, and at his wedding Claudio denounces his bride before the shocked congregation. Hero, heartbroken, feigns death while her family seeks to uncover the source of Claudio's delusions. The villain John's plot is exposed by a bumbling constable, Dogberry, and Claudio and his "resurrected" fiancée appear once again before the altar, this time to be joined eternally.

To this stilted scenario, Shakespeare has added a subplot which is the basis of much of the play's lasting appeal. In Shakespeare's telling, Claudio has a very clever friend, Benedick, and Hero a very clever friend, Beatrice. Benedick and Beatrice, we are given to understand from the start, have been engaged in a longstanding war of words: "They never meet but there's a skirmish of wit be-

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tween them." As a joke, Don Pedro decides to reconcile the two combatants by fooling them into thinking each secretly loves the other. Don Pedro's benign intrigue is helped along by his brother John's malign one: the disintegration of Claudio and Hero's relationship ignites Beatrice and Benedick's. In the end, Love reweaves the torn social fabric, and the marriage of Benedick and Beatrice coincides with that of Claudio and Hero.

To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the original comedy, it is important to follow the interplay of these two intertwining narrative threads, the conventional plot and what we might call the Shakespearean plot. The conventional plot reaches its dramatic climax when Hero comes veiled before Claudio at their second wedding. Claudio, having learned that his accusations against Hero (whom he believes dead) were false, has agreed to marry an unknown second daughter of the wronged Leonato in penance. But this "second daughter" is actually Hero, incognita. At the wedding she casts aside her veil and announces to the dumbstruck Claudio:

> One Hero died defil'd, but I do live,
> And surely as I live, I am a maid.

Branagh tries to pump up the dramatic flatness of this announcement with a great roar from his extras and a great peal from the soundtrack. For members of the audience, however, who know that Hero lives, who never had any doubts about her purity, and who in any case are unlikely to be particularly relieved by her "intact" condition, this revelatory moment is less than cathartic.

Far more affecting than Hero's fate is its impact on the mental state of Beatrice, who is the unmistakable focus of the Shakespearean plot, with its author's characteristic concern for questions of sincerity and personal obligation. This narrative has *its* climax immediately after Claudio's denunciation of Hero at their first, foiled wedding. Benedick lingers after the service to comfort Beatrice, and in an outburst of emotion which astonishes both us and him he professes his feelings: "I love nothing in all the world so well as you—is not that strange?" (Branagh handles this particular moment well.)

Beatrice responds both with her usual wit but also with wonderful passion: "I love you with so much of my heart that none is left to protest." But the encounter is not over. Benedick makes the typical romantic gesture of offering to do anything to solace his distraught lady. And Beatrice demands: "Kill Claudio."

At this moment Beatrice swerves dangerously close to becoming the play's Lady Macbeth. Like that archetypal villainess, she throws down what she claims are appropriate standards of masculine behavior to shame her lover into obedience. Three times she cries out her desire to be a man, for if she were, pity poor Claudio: "I'd eat his heart in the marketplace!" (Beatrice, a veritable maneater, has already offered jokingly to consume all the enemies Benedick has killed in combat.) Benedick at first refuses the vendetta, but then, swept along on the flood-crest of Beatrice's rage, consents.

There is the stuff of tragedy in this. So fixated on revenge is Beatrice that the next time the lovers meet, the first thing she asks of Benedick is whether he has challenged Claudio. Receiving his assurance, she shows no sign of being concerned that the duel may cost her lover his life. There is, in fact, something ghastly in the intensity of her misanthropy.

By focusing on Benedick and Beatrice, and more specifically on Beatrice, the Shakespearean plot encourages us to think this is a play about how women feel about men. Branagh in his turn underlines this "feminist" reading by a clever manuever—which involves one of the play's seemingly incidental lyrics:

> Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
> Men were deceivers ever,
> One foot in sea, and one on shore,
> To one thing constant never.
> Then sigh not so, but let them go,
> And be you blithe and bonny,
> Converting all your sounds of woe,
> Into hey nonny nonny.

In Shakespeare's text this song is performed only once, and at Don Pedro's command, with the intent of softening up the cynical Benedick. In Branagh's production, however, this passing verse assumes much greater significance. As the movie opens, we hear Emma Thompson's silken voice slowly reciting the words to the song as they appear one after another on a black background. The force of this device is to make the lyric into the play's argument. Unfortunately, it is an argument whose implications, as we shall see, Branagh fails to pursue.

From Thompson's disembodied voice we switch to a group of jovial old men and giggling young women sprawled about on a lush Tuscan hillside. We then see members of Don Pedro's company, galloping along the road to the village. The camera draws back and we are given a wide-angle shot of the men riding abreast. All at once, for no apparent reason, the horsemen in unison thrust up their fists in what is supposed to look like a gesture of manly *esprit* but instead looks like something from a college pep rally.

Branagh has referred to this sequence as "sex on legs"—whatever that means—and a number of critics have guffawed about men on horseback looking for other mounts. As the credits continue to roll, the women run to their dressing chamber where they throw off their clothes and douse their wriggling, well-tanned torsos with buckets of water. The men arrive, throw off *their* clothes, and jump into the villa's fountains, where they splash about with naked gusto.

The force of all this flesh and fresh air is to pitch the movie as a lighthearted Italian bedroom farce. Yet not only does such an interpretation run counter to the darker undercurrents of the plot, it is in conflict with the play's overt obsession with Hero's purity. Moreover, Branagh, making a facile connection between the genre of comedy and the idea of pastoral order, has decided to relocate Shake-

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speare's urban play to the sunny Tuscan countryside. Turning *Much Ado* into an *al fresco* frolic is one more directorial decision which reduces the play to a most un-Shakespearean blandness.

AND what of the "Sigh No More" scenario? In the play, the notion that "men were deceivers ever" is borne out by John's repeated efforts to spoil the marriage of Claudio and Hero, as well as by other masculine deceptions. And in the play, too, the verse carries a second nuance: that women must counter the inconstancies of men with their own "blithe" indifference. Branagh has given us a taste of this not-always-merry sexual warfare in Beatrice, who denounces marriage and who seems to live in a state of sustained antagonism toward the opposite sex. But the women who should be supporting her in this sentiment are absent from his screenplay as they are not from Shakespeare's own version, where both Hero and her maid, Margaret, who is used to trick Claudio into thinking Hero unfaithful, have a great deal more to say and do.

Thus, the original Hero, who flirts with Don Pedro and jokes smuttily with her friends, is far more catty and sensual than the movie's pristine little princess. And the unexpurgated Margaret of Shakespeare is not Branagh's homely dimwit but a bawdy, mocking, and emphatically attractive woman. Branagh, having made the potentially interesting decision to center his interpretation on the idea of female hostility and resilience, has so muddled it in the execution that despite the film's energy and commotion we are left at the end with little clue as to the cumulative significance of the action.

No less dismaying is how Branagh has forced the spiritual and ritualized aspects of Shakespeare underground. Hero's return to life and virtue recalls the resurrection motifs which occur throughout Shakespearean comedy. In the scene at Hero's "tomb," where Claudio has been charged to mourn her death, there is a key moment which captures Shakespeare's belief that human penitence somehow coincides with heavenly forgiveness in a great natural cycle. After Claudio recites his elegy to his supposedly-dead bride, Don Pedro acknowledges the arrival of the dawn in a beautifully simple quatrain:

> Good morrow, masters, put your torches out.
> The wolves have preyed, and look the gentle day,
> Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
> Dapples the drowsy east with spots of grey.

Branagh treats this moment as a stage piece, with miles of candles and choral music, but, for reasons completely beyond me, he has cut these exquisite and symbolically-charged lines altogether. His doing so makes it all the harder for the viewer to grasp either the resurrection theme or another Shakespearean idea that is blended with it: that women must be tolerant of male weakness, placing their faith in the recuperative powers of life. Once again Branagh, having laid at least some of the groundwork for this reading, loses track of it, or rather smothers it in sentimentality, heavy-handed direction, and mawkish acting. He does not trust Shakespeare enough to allow any of the play's higher ideas to linger longer than a soap bubble.

Not only does Branagh lose the core of high seriousness in Shakespeare, he also loses his cruelty and cynicism and vulgarity. Thus, he has excised a stream of cuckolding jokes, all trafficking in the familiar horn imagery, as well as speeches filled with the kinds of sexism and sadism that burn in sensitive modern ears. And the customary quota of casually offensive remarks is not filled. Do not expect to hear Benedick in this film tell himself, upon learning of Beatrice's alleged passion for him: "If I do not love her, I am a Jew." Instead, we are given a Shakespeare filled with shapely bare buttocks and lots of over-choreographed crowd scenes.

Branagh has also thoroughly subverted the difficult auditory demands of Elizabethan verse with visual stimuli; decor displaces language. He would rather walk us across pretty lawns than ask us to scramble over those rock-piles of meterless prose which will accumulate into the igneous majesty of the late plays. We get to watch the enamored Benedick splashing slow-motion in a fountain, but not to hear John's thug Borachio remarking that Fashion will form men "like the shaven Hercules in the smirch'd worm-eaten tapestry, where his codpiece seems as massy as his club." Once again the loss outweighs the (dubious) gain.

HAVING botched the thematics, the symbolism, and the linguistic intensity of Shakespeare's work, Branagh is forced to rely on the thespian strength of his company to carry off the show. Unfortunately, the acting, by a mixed band of Britons and Americans, is itself woefully uneven.

The Brits appearing in minor roles all pass muster, especially Richard Briers, who, as Hero's father Leonato, is the soul of long-suffering decency. And, as Hero, the gorgeous young Kate Beckinsale (an Oxford coed earning extra-curricular credit) is so winsome and girlishly sexy that I was doubly sorry Branagh had cut so many of her character's lines from the script.

Unfortunately, Kate Beckinsale is paired with an American who is nearly as pretty as she. This is Robert Sean Leonard, previously of *The Dead Poets Society*, and as Claudio he has plenty of trouble with this dead poet. He pants a good deal and is generally annoying, in what is apparently an imitation of adolescent romantic hysteria. The best that can be said for his performance is that it could be overlooked if it were not for the disasters around it.

Denzel Washington's restrained body language and melancholy dignity might have helped him carry off Don Pedro, but linguistic difficulties do him in. Washington softens but cannot suppress his African-American accent; as a result, Don Pedro's speeches sound mumbled and effeminate, an odd effect indeed from this usually mesmerizing actor. Casting Don Pedro as a black adds still more

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confusion to the illogic of the production. If Branagh had his heart set on an exotically black Don Pedro, why not present his brother, too, as a black man? As things stand, we are asked to believe that Washington is half-brother to Keanu Reeves, which is so visually ridiculous that any notion of character type is destroyed. As for Reeves, when he is not curling his lip as a good villain should, he charges about with the same blank expression of unselfconscious stupidity that he brings to all his film efforts.

Then there is the very odd performance of Michael Keaton as Dogberry, the unhinged constable. Though it is standard to read Dogberry as a pompous buffoon, Keaton has reworked him as a maniacal madman, a cross between Moe of the Three Stooges and one of Monty Python's raving twits. I must confess I liked the result, but it is also true that amid the cozy sentimentalism of the rest of the film, Keaton's nervy weirdness is seriously out of place, and has even upset many of the critics who frothed over the movie; one such offended party accurately called Keaton's characterization "surreal."

In any event, it is impossible to judge how well Keaton understands his character, since Branagh—for no apparent reason—curtails the key scene in which Dogberry offers a horribly boggled but somehow moving description of himself as "a man who has suffered losses." Branagh's camera fades out just as Keaton is about to deliver his character's best lines.

And so we are left with the case of the production's resident geniuses. As Beatrice, Emma Thompson is terrific, although her husband does allow her to overact a bit. Her face is both lovely and complicated, and she moves splendidly, all lithe and long-boned sensuality. Her reading of Beatrice carefully walks the line between sassiness and outright bitchery, which is crucial to the dramatic sense of the story: because Thompson has suggested Beatrice's darker and more dangerous side, her demand that Benedick kill his friend is entirely believable. The actress is the best thing about the movie, just as her character is the best thing about the play.

And Branagh as Benedick? It is a hallmark of the British style of performance, so much stagier and more calculated than the American naturalist school, that only a first-rate actor can carry it off without looking thoroughly affected. Branagh, though he has the resources of a first-rate actor, does not succeed here. The camera hardly records a moment when he is not "behaving." His face skitters through a series of preset instructions meant to register emotion: i.e., "bite lower lip" to indicate perplexity; "narrow eyes" to signify anger; etc. The mugging gets so out of hand that in one scene he actually does a pop-eyed double-take at the camera to display surprise. By this point it is obvious he is not acting; he is merely directing himself, and doing a bad job of it.

THE many glaring mediocrities in this undertaking force us to ask how much talent Branagh actually has. The answer is: a lot, but. Even at the appearance of *Henry V*, it was clear that critics were overstating his originality, and it now appears from the strenuously "original" *Much Ado* that when he sets off in pursuit of that elusive quality he does so at the cost not only of a necessary self-discipline but also of his real strength, which is, precisely, a feel for the "traditional" Shakespeare.

Henry V was hailed as a Vietnam-tinged reading of the play, but the claim stemmed mainly from small touches like Branagh's reinsertion of Henry's brutal threats to ravage a besieged French town (they had been omitted from Laurence Olivier's 1944 version), or from his decision to film the Battle of Agincourt as a slow-motion bloodbath, a depiction influenced by scenes from Oliver Stone's *Platoon* and the earlier work of Sam Peckinpah. These were hardly revolutionary cinematic flourishes, however, and in general *Henry V* stuck to Shakespeare's conservative notions of the social order as it is embodied in royal character. Indeed, it is precisely because of its traditional grounding that I think Branagh's *Henry V* will hold up, as his *Much Ado* will not.

As the only significant young Shakespearean filmmaker now working, Branagh has the opportunity, which he is apparently aiming to seize, to help keep an entire dramatic tradition alive. Yet *Much Ado About Nothing*, following the undeniably great promise of *Henry V*, represents a decline. One hates to think that the irresponsible critical excesses which greeted this new movie will encourage Branagh's tendency toward kitschy self-indulgence. And one also hates to think that the man hailed a few years ago as the new Olivier will turn out to be the new Zefirelli.

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The Bongo-Bongo Debate

THE SUBVERSIVE FAMILY: AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE. By FERDINAND MOUNT. *Free Press. 282 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH ADELSON

The Subversive Family was published in England ten years ago but has only recently made its appearance in this country; even so, it is ahead of its time.

Ferdinand Mount's thesis is that we have been living through a period of ideologically-inspired attack, meant to persuade us that there is nothing "natural" about love, marriage, the family, or, for that matter, human nature. All these, we are to believe, are constructed by the social system.

Much of the case for this now-conventional attack is made by anecdote, wherein many of our assumptions about inherent human motives are challenged, then demolished. Do mothers have a strong emotional bond to their infant young? Not at all, or at least not until recently, for in olden times parents expected many of their infants to die, and so did not become attached to them. Is the nuclear family the natural pattern? No, it too is a recent development, extended families being more common in earlier periods. Marrying for love is also a myth; romantic love was invented by the medieval troubadours and was meant to apply primarily to adulterous passion. In fact, marriage altogether is on its last legs, soon to be superseded by something else: communes or various forms of the alternative family.

These ideas, and the large doctrinal network underlying them, continue to hold sway among "progressive" thinkers. The simple-minded relativism I remember from my college days ("don't worry, honey, it's only considered wrong in *our* culture") has grown and grown to become our collective tacit assumption. It has infected all domains—the humanities, the social sciences, morality, religion—and has become the seedbed of today's multiculturalism.

Indeed, given the extraordinary variations in human society, how *does* one argue the contrary? An anthropologist friend once told me of a rhetorical strategy he called Bongo-Bongoism (named after a mythical South Sea Island tribe): should someone argue for a universal human trait or custom, just reply haughtily that it cannot be found among the Bongo-Bongo, and that will usually end the debate. And like the anthropologist, the historian too can bring to bear his own esoterica in support of relativism. Who will dispute him on the curious connubial customs of medieval Thuringia?

Ferdinand Mount would, and does. The editor of the (London) *Times Literary Supplement*, Mount is the kind of literary critic not often seen these days, possessing enough self-confidence to venture into alien territory, master a new language, and, for better or worse, draw his own conclusions. In the case at hand, Mount contends that the "progressive" view of the family is compounded of myths, supported by misleading or simply false readings of the historical evidence. For his own counter-history he leans heavily on the work of Peter Laslett, the most prominent among a number of scholars who dispute, at times quite scornfully, the idea that the small family is idiosyncratic and the extended version normative.

Thus, contrary to the "progressive" school of historians—Lawrence Stone, Edward Shorter, Philippe Ariès, and others—Mount, following Laslett, asserts that most marriages in the past were *not* arranged, or contracted for pecuniary reasons. Nor is it true, according to Mount, that most families imposed marital partnerships on their unwilling children or that mothers were indifferent to the survival of very young children. Finally, the nuclear family, far from being a recent historical accident, is, Mount insists,

> older than Jesus and Plato and Marx and Engels, let alone older than the Industrial Revolution. . . . The nuclear family with all its drawbacks and dangers is a biologically derived way of living which comes naturally to us and which generates an emotional force of enduring and unquestionable power.

In a particularly compelling chapter, Mount asks where and how the new historians went astray. For one thing, he writes, they confuse the history of art and literature with the history of the family, taking visual depictions and narrative accounts of aberrant or extreme situations as essentially accurate representations of normal family life. It is, he says, quoting Laslett, as if a future historian were to use *Lolita* and *West Side Story* as a "source book for our own sexual habits." Further, they tend to ignore commercial and working-class life, drawing their evidence mostly from upper-class or ecclesiastical sources. We also see misunderstandings of the tone and context of historical testimony, as when a few proverbs about marriage and property are taken as authentic expressions of belief.

It may seem that Mount has simply chosen sides in an argument between historical schools. He has done that; but it soon becomes clear that he has a much larger conflict in mind. The argument between the Laslett school and the "progressives" is only the latest expression of a much older dispute: in Mount's terms, the dispute be-

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tween ordinary citizens and what he calls public ideologues—the priests, artists, intellectuals, generals, and elitists of all eras.

These castes, Mount argues, have always hated the family, which they regard as the major source of resistance to their utopian plans. The family, in their view, is a selfish institution, attracting the "ardor and effort that ought more properly to be showered on God or nation or community or class." We find this attitude in Plato's *Republic*, again in the medieval Church, still again during the Enlightenment, later in Engels, and these days almost everywhere, most strikingly in utopian feminism.

READING this book, I am struck by the parallels between its emphasis on human universals and a similar emphasis now emerging in some of the natural and social sciences. My own field of psychology has until very recently been dominated by pure environmentalism. That doctrine holds that there is very little to the idea of human nature. What we are is what society compels us to be; all human differences are produced by the social system. Now, however, there has been an outpouring of research concentrating instead on the generic qualities of human behavior, a good deal of it precisely in the realms of love, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

Some of this work has uncovered recurrent social and psychological patterns in widely separated cultures. Thus, my colleague David Buss, studying men and women in 37 countries, has found a remarkable degree of consistency in what each sex desires in a mate. Other findings come from biochemistry, as in the recent suggestions that there is an intrinsic tendency to fall in love, associated with chemical changes in the brain. Even divorce may have a biological component; a recent study by the Minnesota group concentrating on twins strongly suggests that divorce runs in families. From E.O. Wilson in sociobiology to James Q. Wilson in social science, work is being done that reinforces these findings.

Pondering these texts and under the spell of Mount's vibrant argument, one might be overcome by a moment of giddy optimism. The tide is turning! But such euphoria does not last the moment—not, at least, at most universities, where the study of history and literature, and society and psychology, remains firmly in "progressive" hands. What is worse, the younger cadres—junior faculty and graduate students—are the most fervent and the most politicized. For me and most of my colleagues, what we see, looking ahead, is still more of the same.

The Post-Cold-War Age

THE REAL WORLD ORDER: ZONES OF PEACE/ZONES OF TURMOIL. By MAX SINGER and AARON WILDAVSKY. *Chatham House. 228 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by PATRICK GLYNN

THREE years into the post-cold-war era we are still searching for our George F. Kennan—someone to delineate the main outlines of the international environment and prescribe a new strategy, as Kennan did with "containment" at the outset of the cold war. Perhaps because of the complexity of the new international scene, or perhaps because of the relatively well-developed nature of our foreign-policy dialogue—in Kennan's time there was little in the way of an established intellectual tradition of American thinking about foreign policy—no single such figure seems likely to emerge. What we have instead is a multiplicity of books and articles, each contributing pieces of the puzzle, none so far seeming definitive.

Max Singer, co-founder with the late Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute, and Aaron Wildavsky, a professor at Berkeley and one of the nation's most eminent political scientists, have teamed up to offer an original, if somewhat

PATRICK GLYNN, *a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of* Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War *(New Republic Books/ Basic Books).*

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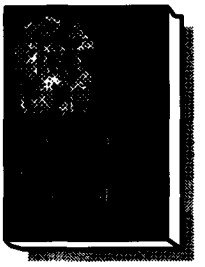

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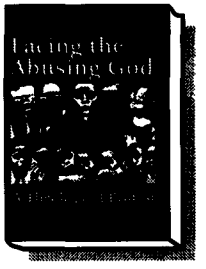

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quirky, contribution to this ongoing discussion. An avowed attack on the "old thinking" of professional foreign-policy analysts, *The Real World Order* attempts to define a comprehensive "new thinking" on which to base U.S. foreign policy. While the book falls short of achieving this grand ambition, it does offer some useful correctives and challenges as we think our way toward a new strategy for the post-cold-war world.

The core of the book is a highly, perhaps excessively, schematic justification for what amounts to a generally noninterventionist foreign policy. According to Singer and Wildavsky, the world is now divided into two major zones: "zones of peace," including the United States and the other major industrial democracies and constituting about 15 percent of the world's population along with most of its wealth; and the much vaster "zones of turmoil," which are not yet democratic and are still in the throes of development. Within the zone of peace, they argue, the old logic of power politics—hegemonism, the balance of power, above all, war—has ceased to apply; modern, rich democratic nations may disagree and may even be bitter economic rivals, but they will not go to war against one another. Outside the zone of peace, on the other hand, the ancient international anarchy—persecution, power struggles, famine, and war—ineluctably persists.

Singer and Wildavsky's argument is simple: there is not much we can do to improve conditions in the "zones of turmoil." Luckily, however, nothing that happens there "will threaten the existence or vital interests" of the modern industrial democracies. What they recommend is essentially a foreign policy of benign neglect—a posture of general noninvolvement in the outside world, combined with modest efforts to promote democracy abroad (which they believe will spread inevitably anyway) and rare instances of intervention, always in a multilateral context.

In the authors' view, foreign-policy professionals are guilty of excessive gloom in the wake of the cold war. In a never-ending search for new problems, analysts have focused excessively on the bad news while failing to digest the most salient fact about contemporary geopolitics: with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States no longer faces the possibility of defeat by a foreign enemy. "No threat now existing or on the horizon remotely approaches the size of the threat that the West lived with for decades," they write. ". . . For the first time the scourge of war has been lifted from at least one-seventh of the world." That is why they are self-described "optimists."

Well, almost. Threats to the Persian Gulf and its oil are a "possible" exception to this rosy picture, according to the authors, as is the spread of missiles and nuclear weapons. Indeed, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction turns out to be a serious problem. "North Korea," they write, "may soon join Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus as nuclear powers in the zone of turmoil." Furthermore, "if the world continues to be nuclear," Thailand, Malaysia, Burma, Vietnam, and Indonesia could join the nuclear club. Finally, "it would not be amazing" if by 2020 "there were as many as ten or more Islamic nuclear powers from Morocco to Pakistan."

Hence, the authors contend, amid the general complacency we may adopt vis-à-vis the outside world, something will have to be done about weapons proliferation:

> Since an increasing number of countries or groups are likely to have the physical ability to cause hundreds of thousands of American deaths by attacking U.S. cities with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons, one of the few fundamental objectives of U.S. national-security policy must be to provide as much protection as possible against this possibility.

They recommend redoubled nonproliferation efforts, as well as deployment of missile defenses, which they acknowledge may not be foolproof. Nevertheless, the authors assure us, even the destruction of an American city will, "in any event, not be a threat to national survival or independence."

IF THIS is "optimism," show me pessimism. One suspects that Singer and Wildavsky would have been better off proposing their provoca-

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tive schema in a short essay or article, because by the time they carefully (and honestly) detail all the various possible exceptions to their scenario—threats to Middle East oil, threats to Israel, Chinese Communist aggression, North Korean aggression (the possibility of which they downplay), and above all the future danger of a missile attack on an American city by some irrational third-world power, the celebrated "zones of peace" begin to look somewhat less secure than originally advertised. Indeed, in a world where mass-destruction weapons and technologies are spreading—hastened, as the authors themselves emphasize, by the break-up of the Soviet Union—it seems odd, to put it mildly, to claim that threats to U.S. basic national security or vital interests have somehow disappeared.

Certain of their arguments seem unexceptionable. Yes, the modern democracies do play by different rules from those of the outside world. No, threats from Germany or even Japan do not seem plausible today—though the authors acknowledge that in the latter case democracy may not be so deeply rooted. And, of course, in principle, the modern democratic world, or at least the United States, possesses the technological and organizational wherewithal to overwhelm any conceivable third-world military.

But security is always a function of will as much as capability. By the time the authors have finished removing much of the justification for an internationalist American foreign policy, it is difficult to see where we will find the domestic support to maintain the kind of expensive, highly ready, forward-based military force that made Desert Storm possible, let alone the money for serious missile defenses. (Indeed, if the proposed Clinton-administration defense cuts go forward, we will end up with neither.)

Some of the authors' grand political proposals, meanwhile, seem downright silly. While one can certainly endorse the idea of intensified nonproliferation and arms-control efforts, provided they remain sensible, it is hard to take seriously the authors' vision of an internationally-controlled nuclear force policing an otherwise nonnuclear world. Their proposal for a binding caucus of the 78 or so "democratic" member countries of the UN General Assembly is similarly quixotic. Can one imagine *any* regional issue on which 78 countries could agree? Besides, what good would it do, given the nonbinding character of General Assembly resolutions? Their excessive faith in the UN and other multilateral arrangements seems unwarranted—especially in the wake of the Bosnian debacle, where multilateralism has proved a recipe for shameful paralysis.

ON THE bread-and-butter question of when and where the United States should intervene, the authors offer little except a protracted and generally pedestrian discussion of why such decisions have become so difficult in the post-cold-war age. For the moment, to be sure, our vital interests do not appear to be threatened in places like the former Yugoslavia—

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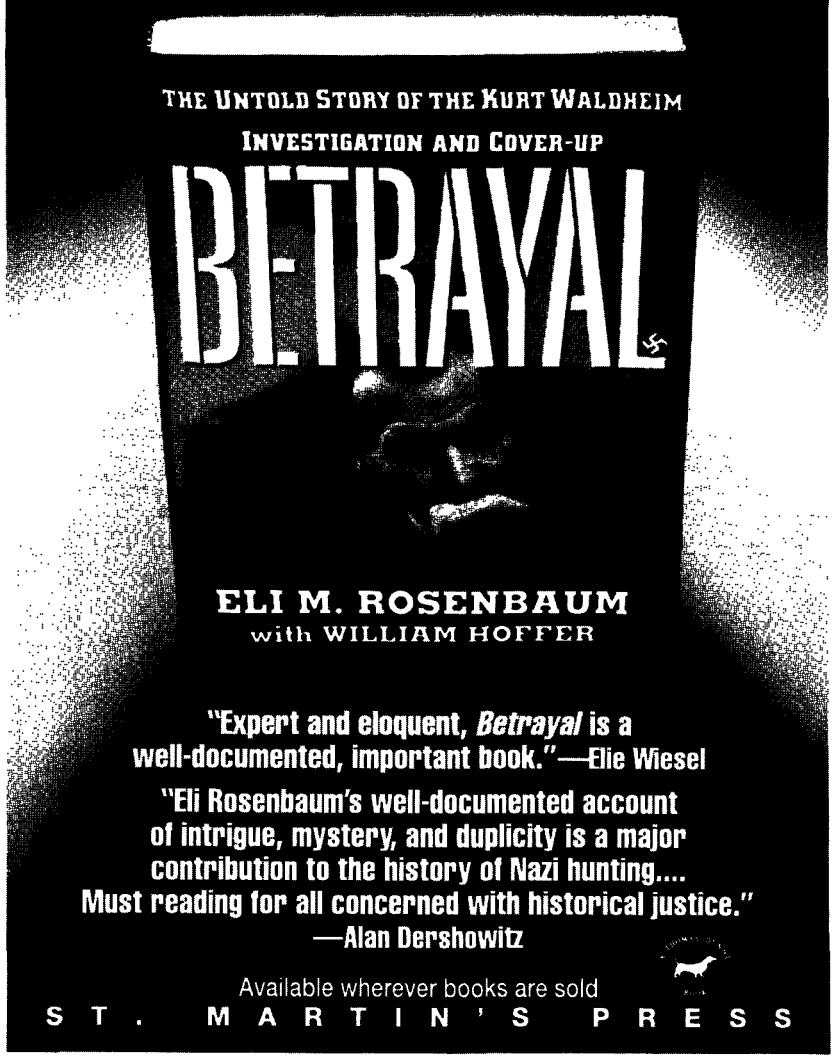

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though they recently were, and could be again, in the Persian Gulf. But this is by no means the first time in history that the democracies have confronted indirect challenges to the international order whose outcome could affect the course of future events.

Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 did not compromise American vital interests, any more than Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia threatened those of European states. But Western complacency in both cases contributed to a climate of international lawlessness that made world war more likely. Today, the looming threat is not so much from a new great power like Japan or Germany as from third-world states armed with increasingly dangerous weapons. The question is whether such states can be held at bay in the absence of some more general and consistent effort to enforce the world order.

Singer and Wildavsky seem to assume they can be. But the world vision they articulate bears a disturbingly strong resemblance to the structure of modern American urban life, where residents of suburban "zones of peace" long to forget about the urban "zones of turmoil." For the most part, crime remains confined to the bad neighborhoods, but more often than is comfortable, it comes home to haunt the suburbanite. The same is likely to prove true in foreign affairs.

China's Lost Children

A MOTHER'S ORDEAL: ONE WOMAN'S FIGHT AGAINST CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY. By STEVEN W. MOSHER. *Harcourt Brace. 335 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM MCGURN

OF ALL the world's languages, few can be more vividly informed by images of home and family than Chinese. The character for "good," for example, is a son and a daughter. "Safe" or "secure" is rendered as a woman with a roof over her head. A woman who is pregnant will commonly describe her condition as "having happiness."

Originally even Chairman Mao subscribed to the view that the more Chinese, the merrier, and rejoiced in the muscle of China's millions. But later he changed his mind. In one of those swings of the pendulum that have wreaked such damage on the Chinese people over the centuries, party officials in the 1970's launched what has become the most ruthless population-control program in history, the so-called one-child policy. As usual, the masses lagged behind the vanguard, and measures to ensure their conformity became progressively severe.

In 1980, Steven Mosher, a doctoral student at Stanford University and one of the first Western academics to visit a then-newly-opened China, was also among the first to expose the harsh realities of Chinese population control. Over the course of a year spent in rural Guangdong, Mosher witnessed Chinese women being herded into clinics to be aborted and sterilized. Others were subjected to family-planning "study sessions"—much like the "struggle sessions" of the Cultural Revolution—in which they were harangued and cajoled by local officials.

All these abuses Mosher duly reported in studies that would eventually result in his first book, *Broken Earth.* But Mosher's findings proved almost as embarrassing to the West as to Beijing; in response to pressure from the Chinese, who threatened to cancel all academic exchanges, Stanford chucked Mosher out of its doctoral program. Few rallied to his side.

Now Mosher has returned to the issue in *A Mother's Ordeal: One Woman's Fight Against China's One-Child Policy.* Along with John S. Aird's 1990 classic treatment,* Mosher's latest work should remove any doubts about the nature and reach of the Chinese program. But what makes his book so compelling is Mosher's decision to stay in the background and allow the drama to unfold through the voice of a participant-turned-victim, a Chinese nurse now living in America whom Mosher names Chi An.

In China, Chi An had brutally implemented population control on others—her activities included hunting down, forcibly aborting, and then sterilizing a best friend who had gone into hiding to have her second baby. Then, after joining her husband in America—he had come here on an engineering scholarship—Chi An suddenly found herself on the other side of the Chinese authorities when she herself became pregnant. Mosher details the extraordinary lengths to which the Chinese bureaucracy went from afar to have her abort ("Comrade Chi An," read one letter, "any further delays and you will be punished according to the law. There is nothing ambiguous about our order!"); the anguish that would not go away even after the birth of her daughter ("she was both balm and wound, consolation and accusation, for her very presence seemed to speak to me of all those other children who were absent"); and the couple's ultimately successful bid for political asylum.

For the most part, however, *A Mother's Ordeal* is simply a retelling of Chi An's life, which is the story of how a nice girl got involved in a dirty business—and also, thereby, the story of modern China.

Chi An was born in 1949, the year the Red Flag was first raised over Tiananmen Square. In contrast to her elder brother, whose birth, ensuring the family line, occasioned great celebration, Chi An does not even know the exact date she was born. Her childhood, normal enough, was punctuated by the hardships and occasional food shortages ushered in by Mao's

WILLIAM MCGURN *is a senior editor of the* Far Eastern Economic Review *in Hong Kong and the author of* Perfidious Albion: The Abandonment of Hong Kong 1997.

* *Slaughter of the Innocents: Coercive Birth Control in China* (American Enterprise Institute, 1990). Aird, who has been writing about Chinese demography for more than three decades, marshals an exhaustive body of evidence to refute the idea that there is anything moderate or voluntary about Beijing's one-child policy. "The Chinese program remains highly coercive," he writes, "not because of local deviations from central policies but as a direct, inevitable, and intentional consequence of those policies."

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grand experiments. When the Cultural Revolution arrived in the 1960's, Chi An was a teenager, the perfect age; she reports the rush of pride she felt when she slapped the president of her college during a public "struggle session." For this she was awarded a coveted Red Guard armband.

But then the Cultural Revolution petered out, and Chi An ultimately settled into a nursing career. In China this meant that she would be enforcing the country's population program. She and her team traveled into the countryside to insert IUD's and to abort and if possible sterilize peasant women:

> We worked very fast—one four-inch incision in the lower abdomen, clamps to hold it open, the bladder flipped up out of the way, left and right fallopian tubes severed, the several layers of muscle and skin sutured back together, and then onto the woman on the next table. "This is like spaying sows or cows," the doctors used to joke coarsely after several days of morning-to-night sterilizations. "I bet we are almost as fast as veterinarians."

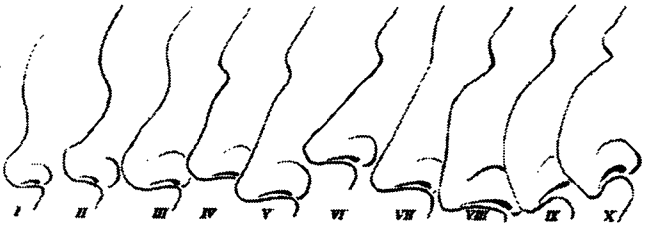
Occasionally Chi An suffered pangs of guilt, as when the only son of a village woman who had recently been sterilized was struck down by meningitis. Late-term abortions were the worst: one runaway girl brought in by the authorities went into labor before she could be aborted; her infant shrieked for a half-hour before dying from an injection of formaldehyde into the soft spot in his tiny skull. Chi An was spooked when a fellow population officer kidded her about having "lots of little hands clawing at you" in the next life.

But the horror the reader feels in following Chi An's story has less to do with abortion *per se* than with the accompanying elements of coercion and violence, and less to do even with these than with a philosophy which impels the regimentation of the life-force itself according to some abstract central-planning target. The list of specific indignities imposed on the Chinese people by that philosophy is numbing: factories keeping track of their female exployees' menses; couples forced to sign an agreement at marriage that they will have no more than one child; births allocated by ration tickets; the inserting of steel IUD's which can show up on regulation X-rays; and so forth.

The party's retreat to euphemism—"persuasion," "remedial measures," "administrative action"—only sharpens the Orwellian edge. In an interview recently reprinted in the *South China Morning Post*, the director of the Chinese population-control effort, Peng Peiyun, conceded that what Beijing calls persuasion the West defines as force. ("We in China," she said, "consider it to be persuasion and reasoning *until she agrees*" [emphasis added].) Chi An became an expert in such persuasion, locking up those who would not go along until they changed their minds.

ALL this Chi An tells in clear and direct prose, the more striking because there has been little effort to conceal the colder aspects of her character. Not that Chi An is, or was, any kind of monster. Rather, she is an ordinary human being whose own survival, like the survival of those around her, depended on her deadening the normal impulse to empathy and decency. "It was," she says, "dangerous in China to be too sympathetic to others."

Today her story has acquired particular urgency. This past spring, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* ran pieces highlighting the grisly facts behind the just-released Chinese figures for 1992, which show that the country has met population-control targets hitherto thought impossible until 2010. The irony involved in such exercises does not escape Chi An. Mao came into power proclaiming that "women hold up half the sky"; after four decades of rule by a one-party state, his heirs have decided to hold not themselves but Chinese mothers responsible for the coun-



German physiognomist Carl Huter's 1904 study of the nose and its relation to character and beauty. The scale runs from the child's nose (I) to the nose of the Jew (X). The "German" nose (IV) is the norm.

IT WAS AN INTERESTING TIME TO BE A JEWISH PHYSICIAN—by the end of the nineteenth century popular prejudice against Jews had found its way into European medical journals, and the medical establishment was convinced that Jews were both diseased and perverted. Sander Gilman traces the "medicalization" of anti-Semitism in turn-of-the-century Vienna, and the response of Jewish doctors—especially Sigmund Freud, working in the new science of psychoanalysis.

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try's development. "How convenient," she notes, "for the authorities to have a prestigious foreign theory—overpopulation—that allows them once again to shift the blame onto the Chinese people."

As for Chi An herself, she and her family are safe in the U.S., thanks to a decision by then-Attorney General Edwin Meese to extend refugee status to those caught in her dilemma. Expressing her appreciation with typical Chinese grace, Chi An has named her daughter Mei, which means beautiful. It is also how the Chinese say America.

Fatal Attraction

BITTER CARNIVAL: RESSENTIMENT AND THE ABJECT HERO. By MICHAEL ANDRÉ BERNSTEIN. *Princeton University Press. 243 pp. $29.95.*

Reviewed by GARY SAUL MORSON

INTELLECTUALS often exhibit a fatal attraction for everything that intellectuality would seem to exclude. As if to prove that they, too, have charisma and erotic energy, mild-mannered professors allow themselves to be captivated by a truly monstrous figure: the raging rebel, filled with envy, spite, and murderous audacity. In the early 1970's Tom Wolfe chronicled how limousine radicals loved to rub shoulders with Black Panthers, but something much more sinister than this pathetic spectacle sometimes emerges from the intelligentsia's self-congratulatory self-loathing. The 20th century has witnessed intellectuals supporting Mussolini and Stalin, Mao and Ché, the Khmer Rouge and the Shining Path: anyone, so it seems, whose horrible energy might offer a vicarious thrill, at whatever cost to millions of people.

As if to feed off this tendency, our time has witnessed the rise to prominence of a second type, once treated with contempt but now beloved by intellectuals: the rebellious victim. Shabby but angry flouters of bourgeois social norms have made careers by cultivating this image. The spurious moral capital they appropriate allows them to indulge in a strange kind of whining spite, sometimes called *ressentiment*: a mixture of megalomania and self-contempt, a hatred for others fused with a hatred of themselves. Such figures regard themselves as unappreciated heroes while still suspecting that they are worthless nonentities. Dostoevsky called them underground men, and he regarded them as profoundly dangerous.

Bitter Carnival—whose author teaches comparative literature at Berkeley—brilliantly describes the relation between these two types, the self-doubting intellectual and the abject rebel, as they have developed in the history of European literature and as they exist today.

He begins with the lurid story of Ira Einhorn, once a very well-known countercultural guru in Philadelphia. By the time it was discovered in 1979 that Einhorn had bludgeoned to death a young woman (an acquaintance of Bernstein's) named Holly Maddux, and hidden her body in a trunk for eighteen months, he had already achieved great influence as the spokesman for numerous causes. For example, despite the fact that Einhorn had openly declared that "Violence is the simplest mode of contact—it allows touch without formality," the Episcopal Bishop of Philadelphia sought his advice and put him on the diocese payroll. The president of Bell Telephone of Pennsylvania scheduled regular meetings with Einhorn to keep informed about social issues. And, still more remarkably, Einhorn was appointed a fellow at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government just before the discovery of Holly Maddux's body. Thanks to his local celebrity, the accused murderer was released on $40,000 bail; he fled to Europe and was never brought to trial.

What was it that led so many to embrace Einhorn? Bernstein rejects the standard answer that they were shrewdly trying to "coopt" him. Rather, he argues, they had bought into the myth, widely circulated in the popular as well as the high culture, of the romantic outlaw, the energetic violator of all bourgeois norms. Half-believing in their own philistine mediocrity, they knew the script Einhorn followed and were, as Bernstein observes, "persuaded of his potential significance before any actual dialogue began."

IN THE rest of his book, Bernstein explores the lugubrious history and frightful consequences of this myth. In his reading, the "Be-In" that Einhorn once famously organized in Philadelphia was in effect a reenactment of the ancient Roman Saturnalia and medieval Carnival. In all such rituals, a time is marked out that either recalls the lost Golden Age or foreshadows the coming utopia, when there will be no more social distinctions, no more restraints, and no more straitlaced moral norms—a time of anarchic sexual license and obscene but egalitarian enjoyment. In America, the idealization of Carnival has proven an important ideological tool in the general debunking of authority. But, as Bernstein points out, real medieval carnivals often ended in terrible acts of violence, and the mentality that idealizes them can bring forth monsters.

The spirit of Carnival also infuses the particular literary form that Bernstein examines here, the "saturnalian" dialogue between an intellectual and an underground man, a monarch and his fool, a philosopher and a madman, or, in its original Roman form, between a master and a slave. Bernstein traces this literary tradition from the Roman poet Horace to the 18th-century *philosophe* Diderot and beyond. But its true genius, and the one who saw most deeply into the pathology of the abject hero, was Dostoevsky.

In such figures as the *ressentiment*-filled narrator of *Notes from Underground*, the clownish Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov (the father of the brothers Karamazov), and the countless buffoons of his great novels, Dostoevsky dissected as no one else has done the mentality of self-conscious victimization. From him we learn precisely why former victims who have achieved power

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make the most ruthless tyrants—of all Dostoevsky's lessons, perhaps the most pertinent for our time. As Bernstein writes:

> Dostoevsky's understanding of the dangers of this kind of rage, whose worst effects would not be felt until this century, was prescient in its clarity, and it is fascinating how many of his most tormented Abject Heroes are . . . embittered university intellectuals.

With unequaled brilliance, Dostoevsky also explored why so many representatives of high society or the arts fawn on these rebels and derive a taboo-breaking *frisson* from contact with them.

In our time, critics have approached the brilliant French novelist and Nazi collaborator Louis-Ferdinand Céline in just this way. Céline really *was* a self-conscious abject hero, filled with cringing spite, who somehow managed to see even Hitler's government as infested by Jews. Yet remarkably enough, some recent critics have been attracted to his demonic defiance of all common sense and basic decency. For them, fascism seems to be no more than a matter of literary style, "at which point," Bernstein sardonically observes, its "seductive glamor can be yielded to with a dismissal of the dully censorious bourgeois moralities that might be troubled by just such a move."

In our time, too, the myth of saturnalian license has so suffused our culture that a novel like Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), a compendium of every banality about heroic rebels and wise madmen, can manage to convince people it is defying cultural norms when it is in fact utterly subservient to them. Saturated with the idea that artists are akin to madmen and criminals, we have begun almost automatically to regard madmen and criminals as artists.

WE MAY see the danger of this myth all the more clearly when we reflect that Charles Manson—the subject of Bernstein's final chapter—repeatedly made use of it in his defense at his trial, and that the revolutionary Weathermen and the underground Liberation News Service at first made Manson into a hero. "They even," Bernstein reminds us, "coined a particularly hideous slogan, 'Manson Power—The Year of the Fork,' to commemorate the fork that the killers left sticking in Leno LaBianca's stomach." Listen to the voice of Manson at his courtroom appearance, ringing changes on the theme of rebellious victimization:

> You say how bad, and even killers, your children are. *You* made your children what they are. . . . *These children that come at you with knives, they are your children. You taught them, I didn't teach them.* . . . The [Manson] Family were just people that you did not want. . . . I know this: that in your hearts and souls, you are as much responsible for the Vietnam war as I am for killing these people. . . . I am only what lives inside each and every one of you. . . . I am only what you made me. . . .

These are our era's truisms, and they have not vanished with the 60's. To the view that there really is no difference between moral and immoral people—because, if immorality is the voice of authenticity, it is therefore not immoral at all—Bernstein offers two replies. First, he cites the words of the Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi in *The Drowned and the Saved*:

> I do not know, and it does not interest me to know, whether in my depths there lurks a murderer, but I do know that I was a guiltless victim and I was not a murderer. I know that the murderers existed . . . and that to confuse them with their victims is a moral disease or an aesthetic affectation or a sinister sign of complicity; above all, it is a precious service rendered (intentionally or not) to the negators of truth.

Second, Bernstein contends that sexuality, violence, apocalyptic visions, and dark urgings to domination, far from being "repressed,"

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have instead come to constitute the major part of our cultural conversation about the human psyche, while "what *is* repressed . . . is the force of the prosaic, . . . the myriad of minute and careful adjustments that we are ready to offer in the interest of a habitable social world." This "counter-authenticity," as Bernstein calls it, is what makes decency possible. Safe in their faculty compounds and studios, professors and artists who romanticize the demonic invite a repetition of the horrors that are the real story of the 20th century.

The Mythical Middle

THE CULTURE OF COMPLAINT: THE FRAYING OF AMERICA. By ROBERT HUGHES. *Oxford. 210 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by DONALD LYONS

ROBERT HUGHES, the art critic for *Time*, expands in this little best-selling book on three lectures he gave in 1992. He is, with great fanfare, raising his voice in alarm at the deterioration of language, culture, and education in our "polity." This deterioration he traces to a clash between, on the one hand, perfervid multiculturalists and, on the other hand, rigid conservatives. Seeing language in particular as the key to cultural health, Hughes clearly aspires to write a 1993 version of George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language."

But there are a few things lacking in Hughes's impersonation of Orwell—stylistic gravity and intellectual integrity, to begin with. Hughes's first chapter, for instance, attempts to expose some of the follies of political correctness, that amorphous but ubiquitous force for proper utterance and behavior which is the latest manifestation of the cultural and academic Left. Hughes musters a familiar selection of outrageous examples, such as the waitress who claimed that a customer reading *Playboy* was *ipso facto* sexually harassing her.

But then Hughes elaborately balances his attack on those who perpetrate such things with an even fiercer attack on those, precisely, who oppose them. The Right, Hughes says,

> has a ball with political correctness. Yet its glee is hollow and there is something distasteful about its caperings. . . . Why? Because the Right is as corroded by defunct ideologies as the academic Left.

This is a typical Hughes performance, from its positing of a false symmetry between Left and Right all the way down to its *Time*-esque cuteness ("caperings"). What the Left/Right balancing act conceals is that Hughes's indictment of political correctness is not original, but merely echoes and agrees with the pioneering work of a number of conservative critics over the last five years and more. Lest he be suspected, however, of being one of their company, he strives to make of them a menace as monstrous as the evil they are combating.

This trick requires a fair amount of contortion and inaccuracy. Thus, foremost among the "defunct ideologies" by which conservatives are allegedly "corroded" would be, presumably, anti-totalitarianism. Yet any need for vigilance on this score, Hughes writes, has passed—and no thanks to the Right: "Bush was lucky that the Berlin Wall fell and the Soviet monolith, its underpinnings rotted beyond repair during the Brezhnev years, collapsed during his presidency." That Bush was not a chance onlooker but the continuator of policies which abetted the Soviet collapse; that there never was a Soviet monolith; that monoliths do not have underpinnings (Orwell, thou shouldst be living at this hour); that the military machine which was the USSR was gradually undone, and not from the Brezhnev but from the Stalin years, by the same Western might which Hughes affects to scorn—such considerations escape Hughes, and escape him totally and disingenuously, in the very spirit of that Left correctness he affects to repudiate.

In the second part of the book, Hughes strives to narrow the focus of his attention (and his wisecracks) to one issue: that of multiculturalism, which he puerilely persists in calling "multi-culti." Once again balancing Left and Right, Hughes places himself in some mythical middle between them—or, rather, above them. He considers himself, he tells us, a "genuine" multiculturalist, one who "cares about differences of culture, aspiration, and history between societies or groups." But this noble notion, he writes, is in need of rescue from the current deformation that travels under its banner and that now exercises near-total hegemony in the teaching of history and literature in our schools and universities.

In American history, for example, Columbus is routinely demonized and Mesoamerica idealized, out of a need for "absolute goodies and absolute baddies." How would Hughes correct the situation? Inveterately splitting the difference, he would deromanticize Mesoamerica, "a theocratic ant-state whose rigidity might have made Albert Speer faint," but (naturally) retain the scenario of Columbus-as-Satan. He is more forthright on the fantasies of Afrocentrism which are so championed by multiculturalism. Concerning them he remarks that

> the *African* [his emphasis] slave trade as such, the black traffic, was a Muslim invention, developed by Arab traders with the enthusiastic collaborations of black African ones, institutionalized with the most unrelenting brutality centuries before the white man appeared on the African continent and continuing long after the slave market in North America was finally crushed.

But as if to atone for these frank words, when he turns to the area of Islamic culture Hughes appears to feel that *not enough* has been done by multiculturalism, which he now redefines as, in America, "an improved understanding of the art, literature, history, and values of cultures other

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than the dominant Anglo-Jewish one." (That last phrase is, to say the least, disturbingly clumsy.) To illustrate this allegedly dominant perspective, Hughes tells us how, in 1991, he

> watched the Gulf war on television . . . and saw how that conflict brought to an ugly climax America's long-implanted habit of hostile ignorance about the Arab world, past and present, . . . a succession of pundits came forth to assure the public that Arabs were basically a bunch of volatile religious maniacs, hostage-takers, sons of thornbush and dune whose whole past disposed them against intercourse with more civilized states. Modern Islamic fundamentalism filled the screen with screaming mouths and waving arms; of the Islamic past—let alone present-day Arab dissent from fundamentalist xenophobia and militarism—one heard much less.

I do not know what channels Hughes was watching, but I doubt most television sets were equipped to receive them. For one thing, the Gulf war was fought by us *with* numerous Arab allies like Egypt and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states (not to mention such non-Arab Muslim allies as Turkey) and on behalf of an Arab state. Is it really likely that "a succession of pundits"—or any sane speakers—would have indulged in such lurid racist rhetoric, calling our allies "maniacs"?

Nor were screens filled with the "screaming mouths and waving arms" of puppets of the mullahs, for the very good reason that we were fighting not the fundamentalist and non-Arab (Hughes seems a bit shaky on all this) polity of Iran but the secular state of Iraq.

Finally, the "Islamic past" was colossally irrelevant to the Gulf war; perhaps Hughes longed for a refreshing discussion of the Alhambra as the Scuds were falling, but it is no more reasonable to expect U.S. television to have obliged than to have expected a discussion of Goethe on the radio during the Normandy invasion. Indeed, the whole fantastic scenario seems to owe more to the apologetics of Edward Said than to actuality. It shows, in fact, in its hysteria and paranoia, the very mindset out of which emerge the extremes of multiculturalism—the same extremes Hughes professes to moderate.

What Hughes refuses to "get" is that today's multiculturalism *is* those extremes. Indeed, he persists in thinking, or in pretending to think, that the whole thing is a matter not of ideas but of manners, and that he, as it were, is in the position of Mrs. Moore in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India*, wishing to desegregate the Raj lawn party. He takes avuncular satisfaction in welcoming the likes of the radical black nationalist Amiri Baraka and the radical anti-colonialist Frantz Fanon to the dinner table of the Canon, in contrast to those Scrooges on the Right, with their "conservative fear of mixture," who would debar them. For who, besides phallocratic baddies like William J. Bennett, or philhellenic snobs like Allan Bloom, could object to Fanon sharing a reading list with Plato?

This whole line of argument is dishonest, as anyone knows who has stepped into a real-life multiculturalist classroom these days, where Plato is likely to be kept around only on sufferance and as subject to correction or erasure by the likes of Fanon and Jacques Derrida. Multiculturalism, in short, is the very antithesis of that genuinely humane and universal *paideia* that is eager to include the Sanskrit epic or the Mayan hieroglyphs or the Nigerian novel. It is, to the contrary, instinctively totalitarian and exclusivist; it demands a hierarchy of blameless victims and (white male) oppressors; it is the new Stalinism of the blackboard. Hughes's inability—or refusal—to see this unfits him utterly as an heir to Orwell.

A third and final chapter, on recent controversies over federal funding of the arts, again makes a show of straddling the fence; it knocks Jesse Helms *and* Robert Mapplethorpe *and* multicultural arts grants for "folk" crafts. But once again, what looks like complexity of attitude is really just more gyrating, designed to position Hughes as a friendly critic of the Left and a thoroughgoing enemy of the Right. Which in a nutshell is the story of this slipshod book.

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Marion Magid

1932-1993

The editors and staff of Commentary grieve for their beloved friend and colleague. Marion joined the editorial staff of Commentary in 1963, and from 1968 until her death on September 3 she served as its Managing Editor. No one was more quick-witted, more ironic, or more coruscatingly funny than she; none more fastidious in matters of literary taste; none more solicitous of the numerous writers who adored her and called her friend; none more steadfastly devoted to the intellectual causes with which this magazine has been prominently associated. A lover of Yiddish, and a fiercely loyal daughter of her people, Marion brought into every transaction of life the Zionist convictions that to her were instinct and principle at once. The essays she wrote for Commentary and other publications on the theater, on cultural politics, and on contemporary Jewish experience are touchstones of sensibility and critical judgment. To her colleagues at Commentary she was an ardent companion—gallant, kind, and good; she spurred us on; she was the permanent and irreplaceable darling of our hearts.

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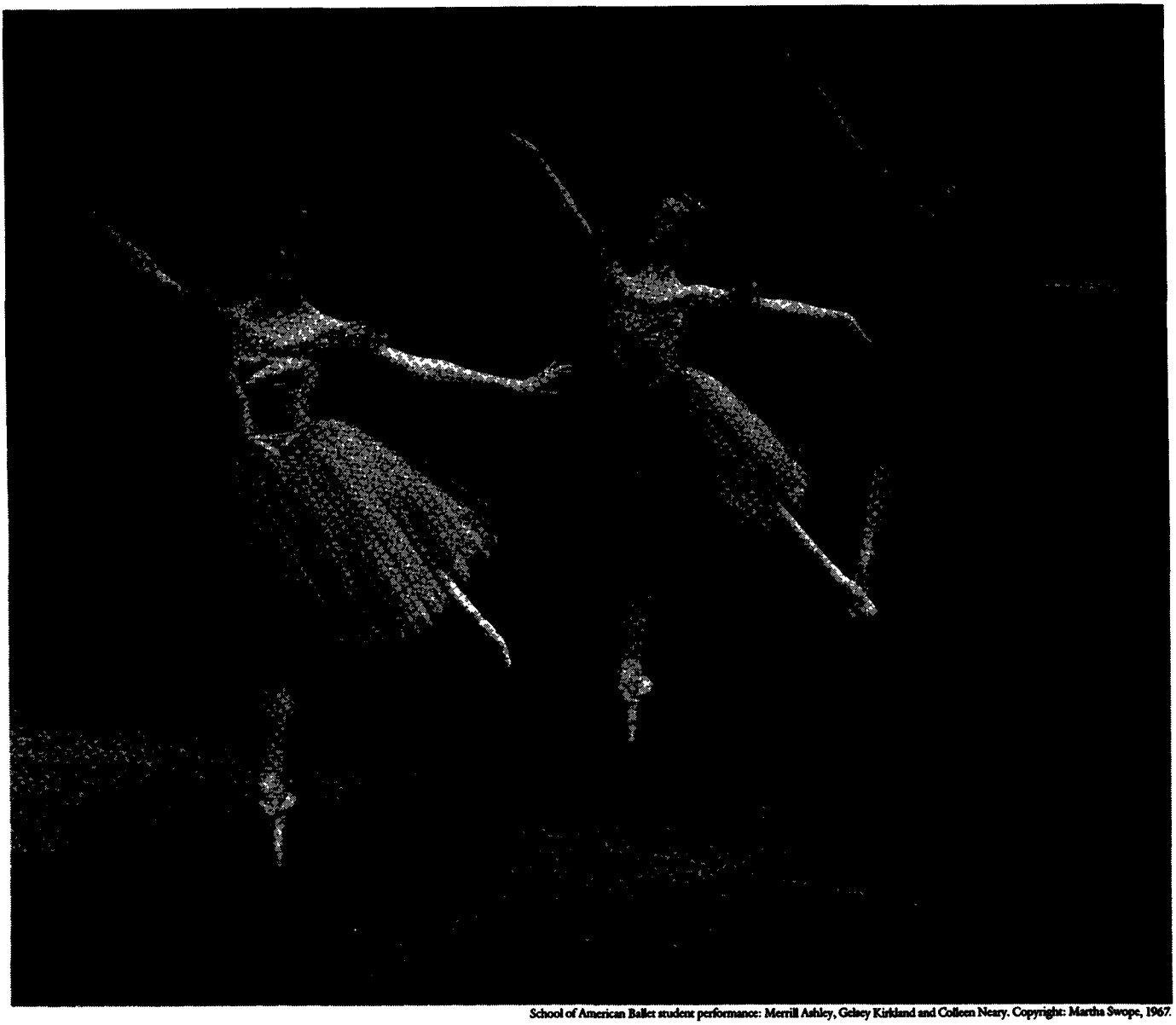

School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

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